# RĀMĀNUJA
## MYTH AND REALITY

Dr. R. NAGASWAMY

C. S. S.

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### A Critical Study of Rāmānuja's Life and Works

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*Vidyavacaspati, Kalaimamani.*
*Pracina Tattva cintamani, Sila Lekha Tattvajna*
*Silai mitta Semmal, Perumbana nambi*

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# PREFACE

This is a critical study based on verifiable inscriptions and documents, of the myths and legends circulated on the life of Ramanuja, that shows these myths and legends are not supported by any evidence. Many Indian and International scholars have hesitatingly questioned these legends earlier, but this study strikes a new path by analyzing the inscriptions found mainly in Srirangam temple and shows that Ramanuja was never the Srikaryam of the temple, was never a party to any administrative reforms nor was interested in any Social reform but was a pure Vedantin and so by jettisoning these concocted stories propagated by the Pauranikas - myth makers, the true greatness of Ramanuja as an outstanding intellectual would blossom. I suggest a further thorough study of original manuscripts and inscriptions, especially at Srirangam, Kanchi and Thiruppati to bring out the true history of Ramanuja. With extensive quotations from Indian and Foreign Scholars, the book I hope would serve as an indispensable work for Researchers, Academicians and those interested in the life of the Great Acharya.

I have had discussions with many eminent scholars, especially Vaishnava historians, whose expositions were of great help in writing this book. I thank all of them for their valuable ideas and suggestions. I am thankful to Ramayanam Srinivasn for his kind appreciation.

I also thank Mr. Ravi, the Proprietor of Jai Ganesh Offset printing for neatly printing this work in a short time.

**Sarvadari, Vijayadasami** **Dr. R. Nagaswamy**

# APPRECIATION

It gives great pleasure to go through the text of **"Ramanuja Myth and Reality"** by Dr. R. Nagaswamy. He has with perfection fixed the date of Ramanuja and established his position in the administration of the Srirangam Temple.

The unnecessary and unproved incidents in the life of Ramanuja does not add anything special to his greatness as a Vedanthi. This author has explained as to why Ramanuja has not written any commentary on the Divya prabandam and classifies him among Vadakalais. This only shows both the factions of Tenkalai and Vadakalai is not a recent origin as believed but even before Ramanuja.

Probably the marking on the forehead may be a latter origin. The Author's attempt to prove that Sri Vaishnavism existed even prior to Ramanuja is quite laudable.

The Sri Vaishnava Community is indebted to this author for throwing a new light on Sri Vaishnavism. I am of the opinion that 'Ramanuja' himself would have been pleased about this treatise on him.

***Ramayanam Srinivasan***

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# 1. RĀMĀNUJA PURĀNAM

In his work "Vedānta According to Sankara and Rāmānuja". (George Allen and Unwin Ltd London, 1928, pp 232-233 the great Indian philosopher Dr. S. Radha krishnan wrote

> "Both Sankara and Rāmānuja were the great exponents of the Vedānta.Their minds were driven to the same problems; their texts were practically the same, their methods were based on the same assumptions, and yet their results show striking differences. Their conclusions reveal their visions, their respective apprehensions of the truth. Rāmānuja trusts firmly to the religious instinct, and sets forth a deeply religious view which reveals God to man through creation, through theophanies, through the prophets, through the incarnations. His study of Ālvārs and the training by the Ācāryas, remained latent in the Upanishads and the *Brahma sūtras*. He did not for a moment feel that he was propounding a system of his own; he was but expounding the wisdom of wise of all times".

Any study of the life and work of a great man should necessarily take into account the milieu in which he lived and worked.

> "The great thinker is the spokesman of his age, and re-lives in his own experiences the ancient wisdom transmitted to him.The saints and teachers in whose company Rāmānuja spent the days moved in the region of religious life and piety". (ibid)

It affords a better understanding of the personality of the thinker. Many of Purāṇikas and writers have projected his life from their angles and at a time when both myths and miracles fascinated the popular mind, they have provided appreciative accounts of his life. We salute all those men who were propelled by their faith and conviction. They also had their freedom to emphasize the points they liked and so they would not fail to appreciate that which provides fresh angle to the same life, even if it is totally different and opposed to their own. This study is undertaken in right earnest to know whether what has been said all these days about Rāmānuja are supported by new evidence that has come about in the recent past.

The *Dharma Sāstras* decree that foremost importance must be given to *Lekhya Pramāṇa* written factual document in preference to other forms of evidence like oral or mythical evidence. Sri Rāmānuja's life is intimately connected with the Srirangam temple. A vast body of inscriptions found in the temple and spread over several centuries which were not available all these years and which have been published in full form provide us with such factual evidence making it now necessary to evaluate the life of Rāmānuja afresh. This new material needs to be compared with what has been so far available as legends and myths. Eminent scholars like Dr. S.Radhakrishnan, S.N.Das Gupta were not aware of this material and went only by the then available legends.Their studies however, were based on the original writings of Rāmānuja in his *Sri Bhāshya, Bagavad Gita Bhāshya* , and *Vedārtha sangraha* and deal mainly with his contribution to Philosophy. So this study is not exploring such works of Rāmānuja. Here the study is confined to Rāmānuja's life based on new material. This study may challenge the existing views and may reject those that are not supported by evidence. Such results are inevitable in such inquiries.

## Life of Rāmānuja

> "Rāmānuja was born in Sriperumpudur in the year 1017 (CE). He seems to have lost his father quite young. After receiving the general education given to boys of his class, he had a course in the Vedānta under Yādava prakāsa at Kanchipuram but he could not support Yādavaprakāsa on all points. Ālavandār, the famous head of the mutt at Srirangam was impressed by Rāmānuja's learning and thought of offering apostolic seat at Srirangam. When Ālavandār drew near his end disciples sent Peria Nambi to bring him Rāmānuja. By the time he arrived, the master was no more, and the tradition relates that when Rāmānuja approached the body, he saw three out of the five fingers of the right hand folded. His disciples explained that he had three unfulfilled desires, the chief of which was writing an easy commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*. Rāmānuja returned to Kanchipuram and continued with his pious duties. One day, in great

distress, he asked the priest of the temple to ascertain the divine will regarding his own future. The will of God was expressed in a verse to the effect "I am the Supreme reality, my view is distinction. Self surrender is the unfailing cause of salvation, individual effort not being essential, release will come at the end. Perianambi is the best of the teachers.

*"Srimān param tattvam aham, matam me bhedah, Prapattih nirapāya hetuh, Nāvasyaki ca smriti antyakāle moksho mahāpurno ihāryavaryah"*

God thus spoke or Rāmānuja heard the voice and set his heart to obey. He met Periyanambi at Madhurantakam and got initiated by him into the mysteries of Vedānta. Great men are often unable to find a woman suitable for themselves and Rāmānuja too was not blessed with a wife who would strive to uphold his ideals and thus increase his powers. Incompatibility is difficult to conceal and Rāmānuja soon felt like Buddha and Sankara and Plato and Paul did, that renunciation is a necessary condition for attaining the highest summit of human perfection or drawing near God. When he became a sanyāsin, he grew very popular and the admiring world called him "prince of ascetics" (Yatirāja). Rāmānuja settled down at Srirangam and acquired full knowledge of the *Tiruvāymoli*. With the help of his disciple Kurattālvar who knew by heart the *Bodhāyanavritti*, Rāmānuja wrote his *Vedārtha sāra* and *Vedārtha samgraha*, *Vedānta dipa* and wrote his great commentary on the *Brahma sūtra* and the *Gita bhāshya*. The learned among the Vaishnavas gave

> their approval to Rāmānuja's exposition and it became "the commentary" *Sri Bhāshya,* for the Vaishnavas. Rāmānuja toured around South India, restored many Vaishnava temples and converted large numbers to Vaishnavism. (SR 231-32)

It is evident from this account of the life of Rāmānuja that, Radakrishnan has gone by the legends then prevailing. He has taken the date of birth of Rāmānuja as 1017, Rāmānuja was not originally interested in becoming a sanyāsin as he returned to Kanchipuram immediately after attending the burial of Ālavandār where he stayed for some time and assumed sanyāsa only as a result of his incompatibility with his wife. He heard God speaking through the priest, he wanted that his followers should be blind followers, and were assured of *moksha* at the time of death. All these no doubt fall in the narrative region of myths.

It is proposed here to study events one by one in the life of Rāmānuja and evaluate. In this process there may be some inevitable repetition which are retained to stick to the context.

## 2. RĀMĀNUJA MYTH AND REALITY

The history of Rāmānuja was derived from traditional accounts furnished by *Guruparampara* and *Koyil Olugu* and later enlarged by traditional exponents as *Rāmānuja's Carita.* We may here examine some very valuable material embedded in these accounts. As Rāmānuja spent most of his time at Srirangam and most of the reforms attributed to him were claimed to have been made while he was at Srirangam, a study of Srirangam temple inscriptions provide most authentic data. A reference to the name Rāmānuja occurs in Srirangam in the time of Rajendra chola III around 1253 CE wherein a land is mentioned as "*Rāmānuja currukkulai.*" Probably this land was connected with his samādhi. The earliest reference to Rāmānuja at Thiruppati occurs in the reign of Vijaya Ganda Gopāla a Telugu Chola ruler who came to the throne at Kanchi around 1250 and ruled upto 1291. This inscription occurs in the east wall of the first gopura and is in fragment and records the gift of 500 *Varāhan panams* with which a land was purchased for creating a flower garden and provisions for food offerings.It mentions the name Rāmānuja in one line and Emperumān in another. In all probability the name Emperumān also refers to Rāmānuja It is known that Rāmānuja was known as Emperumānār in Vaishnava tradition Though this inscription is dated in the reign period of Ganda Gopala neither his regnal year nor the Saka era is available and so it would be difficult to give a precise date to this record. Any date could be assigned between 1250 to 1290 that is the later half of 13th cent. The earliest record in the Varadarāja temple of Kanchi mentioning the name of Rāmānuja occurs in the year 1316. As such we may be sure that Rāmānuja lived certainly 1250 CE. If we give a few decades for the deification of Rāmānuja it is almost certain that he died before 1200. Thus the traditional date of birth given to Rāmānuja as 1017 seems to be acceptable and if he had lived for 120 years and he might have died around 1137.

## Guruparampara

There are two versions of *Guruparamparas* one. Thenkalai version (southern school) and two Vadakalai (northern school. Both these vary in their accounts even with reference to the immediate succesors, each projecting the head of their own school as the immediate successor of Rāmānuja

Many historians have found the narrations in these text implausible. Hari Rao says that Rāmānuja fetched the supplemental processional image of Rāma Priya from the Sultan of Delhi (this is a sheer impossibility as the first Muslim invasion occurred only in the 14th cent) There is no direct epigraphical evidence to show that Vishnu Vardhana (1111 to 1141) was converted from Jainism to Vaishnavism by Rāmānuja (Hari Rao p.108-109) Also see Hari Rao (p.117-119) where he has argued that neither Kulottunga I nor II could have persecuted Rāmānuja. Also the story of consecrating Govindaraja at Thiruppati cannot be true.

There is a graphic description of Rāmānuja's acts and last words just before his passing away in the Tamil work *Guruparampara prabhāvam* ascribed to Pinbalagiya perumāl jiyar whose date is not confirmed. It is said to be an carly work placed close to the time of Rāmānuja. Sri Krishnaswami Aiyangar who published the text in 1968 states in his introduction that there exists a doubt about the period of the author because many statements from *Ācārya hrdaya* and the *kārika* of Vādikesari and also one *sloka* of Vedānta desika are seen verbatim in this text. So a doubt may arise whether this text is later than Vedānta desikar

I think the doubts raised by Krishnaswami Aiyangar are valid when one examines the language of this text, which is in *Manipravāla* employing a mixture of both Sanskrit and Tamil of the time of the mature Vijaya nagara period of 16th cent. The language which is terse and most part unintelligible to the ordinary Tamil readers, lacking also the lucidity and clarity one finds in the language of the Chola period. Though there are profuse quotations from the *Prabandams* the text seems to be that of a non-tamil writer. So Aiyangar opines that it might have been the work of a disciple of Pinpalagiya perumāl jiyar, and that he might have listened to the jiyar's exposition and rendered it in his own words.

There is a statement in the body of the text (p.304) dealing with the life of Rāmānuja that the author wrote this work as it appeared to his mind. It is evident that this text is mainly based on author's imagination and some hearsay accounts. Vedānta desika is assigned to later half of 13th cent and first half of 14th cent. This work was probably composed in the Vijayanagar period in the 16th cent, as the author does not claim to have verified or accessed any document of Srirangam temple administration for its historical authenticity. The author calls the Vimāna of Varadarāja at Kanchipuram as *Punya koti vimāna*. Epigraphical records show that the vimāna was rebuilt and covered with gold by the Vijayanagara Emperor Krishnadevarāya who called the Vimāna as *Punya koti*, and the Vimāna of the Tayar shrine in the same temple as *Kalyānakoti*. This name *Punyakoti* for the main Vimāna does not occur earlier in records. Also the text mentions Gangaikonda-chola-puram as the capital of the Chola several times in the account of Nāthamunikal. Nāthamunikal lived two generations earlier to the birth of Rāmānuja in 1017. Gangaikonda-chola-puram was established as Chola capital by Rājendra Chola I around 1020. So the *Guru-parampara* mixes up chronology and is not historically accurate. But as However it provides an astonishing list of historic personages, it certainly needs to be studied in a different prespective.

However it is an admirable attempt in that it brought an awareness of the *Prabandam* and the life of the Ālvārs and Ācāryas to the Sanskrit knowing fourth or fifth generation immigrants from Karnataka and Andhra regions. As such it is set in the Purāṇic tradition necessarily filled with myths and miracles. The introduction called "*pravesam*" says that it was inspired by *Purāṇa ratnas* and *Yogayājnavālkya* (*yoga yājnavalkya Pancama veda Purāṇa ratna samudanjita pramānākhyah*) The famous compilation on the 63 Saiva saints was called *Periya Purāṇam* or *Thiruttondar Purāṇam*. The most appropriate name for the account on Rāmānuja would therefore be *Rāmānuja Purāṇam* as the main intention is to make a *Purāṇa* out of some events in the life of Rāmānuja. So at the primary level this is intended to be a *Purāṇa* and not history and as such all efforts to justify every aspect Rāmānuja's life as history is fraught with danger. Most of the episodes mentioned are myths and not reality. However a few glimpses of history may be tried from the messy pile of unhistorical narrations.

## Murderous attempts.

According to *Guruparampara*, Rāmānuja's own guru supposedly plotted to murder him as he was unhappy with his disciple's impertinence while he was explaining a passage from Upanishad. The *Guru-parampara* states that Yādava prakāsa his guru was an Adviatin who exclaimed *idanale nam advaitariti curukkum*" i.e by this our Advaita system will shrink. *ivan mudiyum virahu en*? i.e what is the means to finish him off? Then he decided to take his disciple to Varanasi on a pilgrimage and get him drowned there at. Manikarnika ghat. When he and his disciples reached the Vindhya forest Rāmānuja's cousin Govinda secretly warned him about the planned murder and asked him to escape. Rāmānuja is said to have escaped and returned miraculously back to Kanchipuram. When asked how he had returned so early, Rāmānuja told his mother about the attempt of his guru. Yādava prakāsa is saod to have returned later, after which Rāmānuja rejoined him for studies and after some time again he picked up a difference of opinion and left him.

This is the first in a series of murderous attempts on Rāmānuja mentioned in *Guruparampara*, now by an Advaita exponent. This episode lacks credibility. It will be seen that Rāmānuja's life history accounts portray a number of such attempts, each time a person of a particular sect is portrayed as the murderer. Next we see the high priest of Sri

Ranganātha temple attempting to murder him. After which the ruling monarch a Saiva, who wanted to kill him. And finally men of his own sect, the Vaikhānasas of the Srirangam temple tried to kill him. Equally unworthy of any credence is the vilont manner in which Rāmānuja is said to have displaced the Vaikhanasa priest from his post at the Sri Rangam temple. All these episodes were deliberately introduced to elicit sympathy towards Rāmānuja and project the idea that wherever Rāmānuja went he provoked the instinct of others to kill him. These episodes do not enhance the greatness of Rāmānuja that he was, but rather bring him down to a pedestrian level. If the guru attempted to murder him why did Rāmānuja who returned with such great difficulty and with divine help, again return to Yādavaprakāsa to study. The whole episode is couched in such a Purāṇic and mythical language must be rejected as a pure myth. Carman has pointed out the improbabilities in the stories of Rāmānuja's life and chronology. '(P.30)'

## Disgusting wife and Rāmānuja's falsehood.

The story about his quarrelsome wife and Rāmānuja typecasts women as quarrelsome and fans caste hierarchy, and also attempts poorly to portray him as a great devotee of a non brahmin. Once when Thirukkachi nambi came to Rāmānuja's house as an invited guest Rāmānuja was away. As Nambi was in a hurry to go away, his wife fed him with all reverence as she was sincere to her husband . At the end when Thirukkacci Nambi finished his meal he removed the leaf on which he ate and threw it away himself. The woman cleaned the place with water and cow dung when Rāmānuja arrived. According to another version he left and his wife was removing the leaf with a stick when Rāmānuja arrived and asked her what had happened. She narrated that she had just fed Nambi and as he was in a hurry to go had departed. Rāmānuja felt that his wife was cleaning the place with cowdung because she had contempt for lower caste people and it was this feeling that had made her act so. A furious Rāmānuja sent her back to her parent's house with a false letter he wrote, and promised her he would join her later. And when she went away believing him he took Sanyāsa.

Another story is also tagged on to it in which Thirumalai Nambi came and stayed with Rāmanuja for sometime when Rāmānuja's wife picked up frequent quarrels with Nambi's wife that enraged Nambi to leave the place and Rāmānuja got further enraged and sent his wife to her father's home and took sanyāsa. This portrayal is in bad light. First even if the story is true Rāmānuja is said to be compassion incarnate *(Rāmānuja dayāpātram)* and this episode shows him exactly opposite of that. He could not tolerate the behaviour of an unfortunate innocent woman and correct her; instead he wrote a forget letter and sent her away telling a deliberate lie that he would join her later and after she left, took sanyāsa. This is unbelievable story, degrading womanhood and attributing falsehood to Rāmānuja. No one would believe such an exalted personality like Rāmānuja would stoop to this level of falsifying a letter to take sanyāsa. This discredits Rāmānuja's greatness and we cannot accept it as a historical episode. The cleaning of the place where one takes food is a normal custom irrespective of whether the person who eats is father, husband, son or woman. This customary cleaning is done in every house and has nothing to do with caste status. Such an episode is simply unthinkable for a true devotee like the great saint Rāmānuja. And that Rāmānuja wrote a false letter himself could be nothing but a blasphemy and tarnishes Rāmānuja's image. (Life of Rāmānuja, Ramakrishnananda Ramakrishna Mutt, P. 130 - 131)

Again, when Rāmānuja arrived at Srirangam to head the matha of Ālavandār, the head priest of the Srirangam temple tried to poison him from where he escaped miraculously. According another account Rāmānuja himself attempted to poison the priest and kill him (Carman). Such attempts again and again do not speak good of his contemporaries and portray a certain amount of bad intention in narration. They carry no historical substance.

Next the Chola king attempted to kill him by calling him to the court. His disciple Kūrattālvān impersonated Rāmānuja and went to the king's court while Rāmānuja himself after discarding his *sansāya* robes donned himself in white cloth and stealthily escaped to Melkote in Mysore country and stayed there for twelve years till the death of the chola king. Kūrattālvān who went to the court in the guise of Rāmānuja was asked to proclaim that there is no god superior to Śiva (*Śivāt paratāram nāsti*). Kuresa, in a play on words, wrote that Drona was bigger than *Śiva*. Both these words were used those days for a grain measure with *Drona* being a bigger measure than *Śiva*. The enraged king is said to have plucked both the eyes of Kuresa who suffered unbearable pain. He lived blind for twelve years when Rāmānuja returned after the death of the Chola. The name of the king is not mentioned in the text. We are told he was a Chola. The 20th cent Vaishnava historians first identified the king with Kulottunga Chola I, because he was the only king who fited in chronologically. I have shown elsewhere that this episode is said to have occurred when Rāmānuja was in the Srirangam temple in the middle of his life. I have shown that Srirangam carries a large number and of all the inscriptions the maximum number of records of inscriptions (nearly 80) belong to the period of Kulottunga I recording gift of land, gold, cattle and jewels to lord Ranganātha for worship and festivals. Kulottunga's inscriptions are found from the beginning of his reign to the very end of it. He himself donated property for regularly arranging monthly festivals on his own natal star *pūsam* to lord Ranganātha which shows his deep devotion. Besides him most of his queens commanders and other officers gifted enormous amounts to this temple throughout Kulottunga's reign. And what is more the Srirangam temple was under the direct control of the Chola king, who appointed the Srikāryam of the temple and we have the names of all the Srikāryam administrators in the inscriptions. The Srirangam records deal a direct blow to the accusation that Kulottunga I was anti-Vaishnavite and so wanted to persecute Rāmānuja. So Mr Krishnaswami Aiyangar, who edited the *Koil olugu,* rightly agreed that Kulottunga I could not be considered the persecutor of Rāmānuja. On assumption that the persecution story of Rāmānuja was an actual historical event, another Chola was searched and now it is held that Kulottunga II should have been the king who persecuted Rāmānuja. This again is chronologically and absolutely impossible if factual records are taken into consideration.

All Vaishnava historians agree that Rāmānuja was born in 1017. No one is willing to shift this date as they hold this as absolute and also there is no difference of opinion about his age that he lived upto the ripe old age of 120. It is believed that, he lived in Melkote for 12 years and then returned to Srirangam and continued to live for many years before attaining Samādhi. Here comes the difficulty. Kulottunga ascended the throne in 1133. At that time Rāmānuja was aged 116 years. Chronologically all historical records negate Rāmānuja's persecution by Kulottunga II. And we have seen that there is a repetitive tendency to bring in a theory of persecution as a Purāṇic tradition. We have no hesitation in saying that there is no truth in Rāmānuja's persecution. As Rāmānuja is great by his own right he does not need these falsifying stories to create sympathy towards him to enhance his greatness. I have already shown that the author of *Guruparampara* and other writers on Rāmānuja's life created *Purāṇas* with no regard to history. The main work that inspired the *Guruparampara,* according to the same text, was the "*Purāṇa ratna*" Purāṇa per excellence. So we may consider them as good examples of myth making rather than history.

# 3. KARNĀTAKA RĀJĀKKAL SAVISTĀRA CARITAM

The stories relating to Rāmānuja's life are myths is proved by another text called "Karnātaka Rājākkal Savistāra Caraitam" published by Government of Tamilnad in their Oriental series no XXXVIII edited by V.R.Ramachandra Dikshitar in 1952. The Editor in his good introduction gives an account of the Mackenzie manuscripts forming the second part of the History of Karnatic. The account was written by one Nārāyanan of Senji (Gingee) under instruction from Col Williams Macleod the then Collector of Arcot Subha in the year 1808, 200 years ago.

According to Dikshitar the preliminary portion contains details about the origin of Vaishnavism, Saivism and other religions, the services done by the prominent Ālvārs, the part played by Rāmānuja in propagating his religion, his activities in the north, his successful intervention with the Padsha of Delhi Sultan. The editor frankly says he has not evaluated the historicity as it was his task just to publish the text as found.

The text shows that the events in the life of Rāmānuja are narrated in such a manner that any historian will have no hesitation in rejecting them. We will not go into the details except to point out the incongruities.

According to this text :-

Rāmānujachari (It is how the author of the manuscript calls Rāmānuja) incarnated in the year saka 939 (there is an error in reading the manuscripti here. The number 9 which corresponds to 1017 is read as 6) for uplifting the Vaishnava religion. Later one Tribuvana cakravarti Sundara Pāṇḍya who conquered many chieftains came to the throne. After him came his son Vira Pāṇḍya. During his reign Rāmānuja learnt from Periya Nambi of Srirangam, propagated what he learnt to all people, showed his power and so many became his disciples. Rāmānuja learnt the meaning of all the Divya prabandam songs sung by the Ālvārs in Tamil and also the text of Veda vyāsa on Sanskrit. Rāmānujachāri wrote his own Bhāshya of Ubhaya veda. He took his disciples to all the Vishnu temples (except in Malayalam country) and got temples built through kings in 108 Thiruppatis. He gave in the hands of all Vishnu images Sankha and Cakra and applied white *Vibhūti* (*Vellai niru*) on the face of all Perumāls and applied *Sri chūrna* in the middle and applied the same on the body, Also he converted all the temples into Sri Vaishnava system.

Then he established four Pithas and the 74 *siṃhasanādhipatis* and initiated his disciples into *panca samskāra.* They taught the kings and people what was taught by him.

Rāmānujachāri then went to Sriranga pattanam. He performed miracles there and cured the daughter of the king afflicted by Brhama rākshas. Rāmānuja is said to have performed black magic and cured the desease

(Carman p44). Thus he established Sri Vaishnava system in Deccan *(Takkana Cirmai).* Then he went to north Vada mathurai, Gokarnam, Dvaraka, Sindh, Badari Kedaram, Ayodhya and established mathas there and appointed suitable disciples as heads to perform *Panca samskars*. While he was in the north the king of Iran captured Delhi. His name was Sultan Abdulla Khan Hussian. He sent his army towards Deccan and plundered some countries, and accepted tributes from others. His army came to Sriranga pattinam in the western sirmai, plundered its region and carried away the royal image from Melkottai and returned to Delhi.

Rāmānujachārí marched to Delhi with his army of his sanyasins and stayed there for one month with his army of 12000 sanyāsis and demanded the return of the image. The King of Delhi refused but his wazirs told him that these people were worshippers of the idols and would do anything to get it back for worship and this would result in heavy bloodshed. So the Sultan agreed but the image was with his daughter who had embraced it as her own consort. She told the Sultan that if it was taken away by force she would commit suicide with the image. So the Padsha invited Rāmānujachāri to establish a matrimonial alliance *(sambandam)* and he agreed. The daughter of the Sultan was sent with Rāmānuja to Melkote with a diamond crown and precious jewels and money. Then Rāmānujāchāri returned to Srirangam.

In the year Saka 4032 (equal to Fasli 520) a certain Chola raja named Krimikanta Cholan was ruling the Karnatak. During his period Chidambaram (Tillai) had Chitrakutam where Trimurti and other gods had danced *(kūttādina* *idam)* The lord of Dance who danced was Mahā Vishnu with other gods . Śiva also danced with them Vishnu was also called Tāndava.As he was Vishnu the temple came up only for him and the god was called Govindarāja. That Krimikanta Chola uprooted that god as he was an anti - Vaishnavite and threw it as a stepping stone in the Chitrakutam. There lived a Dancing prostitute named Tillai. As she was a great devotee of Govindaraja she could not bear this insult to her god. But she was a keep of the King Krimikanta cholan. She stealthily removed the stone sculpture from the step, placed it on a boat and through sea she brought it to Thiruppati where she got it consecrated and where it is still found. As she was afraid that the king will kill her she committed suicide herself.

The king called the people of all faiths and asked them to sign a document saying that there was no god other than Śiva. All except the Sri Vaishnavas signed. The Sri Vaishnavas told the king that their swami who would sign on their behalf was in Srirangam who alone can sign on our behalf.So the king sent his soldiers to fetch him. The Acharya after having come to know this handed Kūrattālvān to the soldiers and himself escaped in the night to Srirang apattinam alone.

The soldiers of Krimikonda cholan took Kūrattālvān to the court. The king asked him to sign as "There is none greater than Śiva *(Sivāt parataram nāsti)* Kūrattālvān wrote that *Dronam asti param tatah* meaning if there is a measure as Śiva there is a drona measure greater than that. The king got wild and ordered to pluck the eyes of Kūrattālvān . He on the other hand told the king "I don't want these eyes to be plucked out by a cruel man like you". So saying he plucked his own eyes. The king got panicky.

Rāmānujacharya while staying at Srirangappattinam died in the year saka 1059. After Krimikonda chola died in fasli 570 Karikala chola became the king of Jayamkonda chola desa."

In this narration there are many historical inaccuracies. Rāmānuja's birth is given as saka 939 and death as 1137. There was no Sundara Pāṇḍya or Vira Pāṇḍya ruling the Chola country during the life time of Rāmānuja's birth.

According to this account Rāmānuja is said to have died in Śrirangappattinam. This is not correct as it is known that Rāmānuja died at Srirangam. No one would agree that Rāmānuja went with an Army of 12000 Sanyasis to Delhi to fight with the Sultan and the claim that Rāmānuja agreed to enter into matrimonial alliance with the Sultan of Delhi. The historians are aware of how the Delhi Sultans treated Hindu idols and temples. They destroyed them ruthlessly and built mosques right over them declaring that there is no god other than Allah and Muhammad is the prophet. It is amusing to read this account of Rāmānuja which can be rejected summarily.

Equally amusing is the account of Chidambaram temple that it was originally only a Vishnu temple, Vishnu danced there with other gods and Śiva also danced with Vishnu. Further this account introduces a new myth in Rāmānuja story that a prostitute carried the Govindaraja icon through sea to Thiruppati and she got it consecrated there. Other accounts credit this work to Rāmānuja.

It is evident that the author Nārāyanan who compiled this account at the instance of the then District Collector has mixed up several hearsay accounts and woven a complicated myth around Ramunuja's life. Evidently there is urgent need to examine afresh all the original manuscripts connected with the life of Rāmānuja for their date, authenticity and later interpolation. So long as it is not attempted, claims and counter claims will continue. But it is clear these stories can not be given any credence in any historical writng.

# 4. KOYIL OLUGU

A chronicle in Tamil called *Koyil Olugu* i.e Temple chronicle relating to the Srirangam temple is of great importance to the study of the life of Rāmānuja and his administrative reforms Sri V.N.Harirao has published a complete translation in English of this text in the year 1961. (Hri Rao .V.N. *The Chronicle of the Srirangam Temple* with historical notes, published by Rochouse and sons Private limited, Madras , 1961)

> "It seem to be a register maintained by the accountant of the store house of the srirangam temple of the events and happenings recorded then and there in his own handwriting in the presence of four persons. This was kept sealed and was referred to whenever there was a dispute."

There was an opinion that it was completed in the 18th cent. (Epigraphia Indica xxiv p.91) But Hari Rao felt that the origin of this chronicle should be traced to the time of Sri Rāmānuja as he is given the most exhaustive treatment here. The Olugu itself states that it was written by Pūrvāchārya, the Head preachers of the past. It is evident that it is a chronicle of the Rāmānuja tradition with emphasis on Rāmānuja. Hari Rao also observes that it is not impossible that in the past, an original and an early cadgen existed in the Srirangam temple before Orissan and Muhammadan invasion in the mediaeval period. Obviously what has come down is not the original account that shows why the sequence of events is jumbled e.g the period of the Acharyas is dealt with after the first Muhammadan invasion on Srirangam."

In this connection the following notes of Hari Rao are valuable they show when the present *Olugu* was written.:

> "In the year 1801 AD the Carnatic passed under the control of the English East India Company and a Collector John Wallace by name was sent to take charge of the Trichinapoli district in August of that year. The Koyil Olugu and the section dealing with it ends with the statement "that temple was Thenkalai and not Vadakalai". This is the account of affairs of the temple upto the month of Aippasi of Saka 1725, (1803) Rudrotkari. Velappa Mudaliar brought to the notice of John Wallace all the Olugus in the Town and at the desire of the latter had the Olugu rewritten along with the events upto the days of Wallace and placed a copy of the same bearing the seal of the sthānattār in the terkil kallarai i.e southern store room of the temple (Hari Rao ibid Introduction xiv - xv The last sentence is very significant with its emphasis that it is not Vadakalai."

It is clear that it is a work of 19th cent. All the exhaustive accounts of temple administration given in the work as organized by Rāmānuja were prevalent in the beginning of the 19th cent and as said to have been recorded by the pūrvāchārya." The bias towards Tenkalai school found in these records cannot be considered as absolute history. It should not be forgotten that this is probably based mainly on the information provided by the Sri Ranganārāyana jiyar matha in the Srirangam temple where traditionally Rāmānuja is said to have lived and which belongs to the Tenkalai tradition. As such this record does not reflect the events and procedures found in the actual recorded inscriptions found in the temple.

When the British took over the administration around 1800 they started collecting and compiling written documents to decide on the claims and counter claims for ownership and authority. In most cases we find the records are in a stereotyped language and contain the bias of the compiler and his advisers. The British collected statements from influential socialites too and had them registered and preserved them for their verification. We may cite another example of the Collector of Gingee region ordering the compilation of a similar history that resulted in the *Karnātaka Rājākkal Savistāra Caritam* mentioned earlier. The Accounts collected by Mackenzie on the history of *Pālayappatukalin Vamsāvali* is also a similar attempt that resulted in a compilation of Purāṇas and hearsay accounts and not history.

However some traditions recorded in the text are also corroborated by inscriptions; for example the Olugu mentions the tradition of depositing a document in the stores of the temple. A Chola inscription in the Srirangam temple dated in the reign of Kulottunga III dated 1209 relating to a land deed, well drafted, records "this document must be deposited in the store room *(Bandārattu Odukkile kandarula peravenru …vinnappam ceyya)* as requested by Van Tuvarai perumāl. The approval of the lord was obtained and the final order was engraved on stone.

The necessity to maintain the approved records was felt keenly in the chola period and some such records continue to exist in some mathas and temples. One has to evaluate the evidence found in the inscriptions to arrive at real history.

## Srirangam Take Over

Carman in his book on Rāmānuja gives the following account of how Rāmānuja took over the administration of the Srirangam temple.

> "The *Koil Olugu* gives another story not found in the biographies however, which illumines the conflict behind the transfer of power. Even after Rāmānuja had been welcomed and given certain powers, the keys to temple remained in the hands of the hereditary "high priest", Periya Koil Nambi and this high priest opposed Rāmānuja's plan to change from a five fold to a tenfold division of the temple servants (*Parijanas*). Rāmānuja thought of removing him ( the oral tradition of the high priest's family claims Rāmānuja thought of poisoning him), but Lord Ranga appeared to Rāmānuja in a dream and pointed out that "for a long time past Periya Koil Nambi has entrusted himself to Our care. You can do as you please." When Rāmānuja woke up he called his disciple Kurattāvalan and reported his dream. "The existence of my enemy.......seems to be agreeable to the Lord. Let us go to Perumāl Koil (Kanchipuram)." Kurattālvān is said to have persuaded his master that the Lord would help to make the high priest his disciple. "If so, you bring him round", said Rāmānuja. The *Koil olugu* simply reports that Kūrattālvān succeeded in persuading the learned high priest to seek Rāmānuja as his garu and gives after that story of Kūrattālvān. participating in the

funeral ceremonies for Periya Koil Nambi's mother at the conclusion of which Periya koil Nambi gives to Kūrattālvān as the official guest at the eleventh day feast, "the hereditary office of the high priest and the right to read the Puranas in the temple ……. and also the document registering these gifts. Kurattālvān immediately turned over these gifts to Rāmānuja".

The oral tradition handed down by the descendants of Periya koil Nambi gives a rather different version of the events, one that suggests that Kūrattālvān tricked their ancestor out of his inherited status as "high priest". According to this version, Kūrattālvān ingratiated himself with the mother of Periya Koil Nambi, by first singing and later explaining the hymns of the Ālvārs to her. (her son is said to have been a Vedic scholar but not well versed in Tamil Hymns). It was on this account that Kūrattālvān received an invitation to be one of the Brahmin guest at the eleventh-day feast. When asked again he replied that all he still wanted were the keys to the temple. The demands of hospitality forced Periya Koil Nambi to agree. He turned over not only his keys but his house to Kūrattālvān and left immediately for his country home where he completed the remaining rites for his mother. When Rāmānuja and Kūrattālvān tried to enter the temple the next morning, the priests stopped them. They were allowed to proceed only when Periaya koil Nambi came back and confirmed that he had indeed turned over all his perquisites to Rāmānuja's lieutenant."

I do not think it speaks high of Rāmānuja to take over the key of the temple in this manner even against the wishes of Lord Ranganātha, These are good illustrations of concocted stories on Rāmānuja whose greatness is pulled down to question? The take over of the temple administration requires the approval of the then ruling Chola King, under whose direct control the temple was functioning and the symbolic approval of the Lord. Further it would have been inscribed on the temple walls, as seen in hundreds of records in Srirangam temple.

The biographical tradition on personality and even on specific teachings of Rāmānuja following remarks by Carman deserves notice.

> Doubtless the specific words attributed to Rāmānuja after a century or more after oral transmission are so highly coloured by later views of what Rāmānuja ought to have said that they tell us little of what he actually taught. (p.47)

**Victory in debate**

About the story of conversion of Yajnamurti, an Advaita exponent , Carman's remarks are equally interesting.

> Yajnamurti is said to have challenged Rāmānuja to a debate and Rāmānuja agreed and 18 days' duration was fixed for the debate. For the first 16 days neither gained advantage, but on the 17th day Rāmānuja could make no headway against Yajnamurti's logic and went home very discouraged. He then prayed for help of house hold deity lord Varada, who answered his prayer by appearing that night in a dream. Next day Yajnamurti was inspired about Rāmānuja's confidence, admitted defeat even before the debate began.

> "The most striking question to me however is why Rāmānuja's followers would have remembered and retold the story in a form that seems to reflect so little credit to Rāmānuja's skill as a debater. It seems that the emphasis on the biographical tradition is not so on the fine points of metaphysics; there seems at times to be a certain anti –intellectual bias and certainly there is an emphasis on all occasion of divine intervention". (p.42).

Regarding the conversion of the Hoysala king Biitiga Vishnuvardhana from Jainism to Vaishnavism Carman remarks

> "Most of the kings of that era were not religious fanatics. Their personal religious preferences did not prevent them from supporting religious institution of Saivas, Vaishnavas and often Buddhists and Jains. Since Vishnuvardhana seems to have had this name Vishnu-vardhanan from the beginning of his reign, it is not clear his favours to Rāmānuja could be considered as "conversion" nor do we have a withdrwal of support to the Jains."

These citations from a serious and unbiased scholar are examples of the difficulty faced by those working on Rāmānuja's biography and cluster of stories built around him.

# 5. RĀMĀNUJA AS A GREAT SOCIAL REFORMER

Rāmānuja is projected as a great social reformer by the Vaishnava historians. In a recent article a distinguished scholar , formerly Prof. of Vaishnavismin Madras University writes, "Rāmānuja renovated many Vaishnava temples and reformed many odd rituals without disturbing the existing tradition" P.290. Obviously he has taken this from some other work.

This is a vague claim, with no evidence to support. No temple has any inscription to show Rāmānuja renovated the temples. Neither Srirangam nor Kanchi Varadarāja nor Thiruppati records prove that he renovated any of those temples. Similar is the claim that he reformed many old rituals in the temple. There is no record in Srirangam to support this view, nor in any of the famous temples like Varadarāja or Venkatesa. The renovations and reforms are only the parts of the myth making written, several centuries after him. According to the repeated myths, he is said to have taken hold of the Srirangam temple worship by dubious means and changed its basic character from Vaikhanasa to Pancharatra system. But the Professor writes "Rāmānuja reformed the rituals without changing its character" which is projecting a contradictory personality.

## Bhāshya to Githa

Continuing his article he says "that was the time when the caste system was very rigid. People of the lowest social order were not allowed to enter temples for worship. Rāmānuja broke that practice. He created history. He admitted the so called untouchables into the temples of Sampath kumaran at Melkote".

This statement is brought with many pitfalls. First of all it is totally against his own written stand that liberation is restricted to the three upper castes only. In his Sribhāsyam he categorically declared that Sudras are not eligible for release. We will examine this in more detail in the sequence. Rāmānuja's stand is unambiguous. If the above statement, that he admitted the so called lower caste in the temple is taken as correct, that would amount to accusing Rāmānuja of inconsistency in his basic tenets, and faulting him for confusing the people. Here we are faced with an irreconcilable situation. While Rāmānuja insisted that there is no question of Sudras obtaining liberation, in his Gita Bhāshya chapter ix there is a passage that contradicts his position. In the relevant verse, Krishna says Stris, (women) and Sudras are also empowered to obtain the supreme place

*Mām hi pārtha vyāpasritya yepi syuh pāpayonayah*
*Striyo vaisyāh tathā sudrāh tepi yānti parām gatim.*

"Women, Vaisyas and Sudras even those of sinful birth reach the supreme goal finding refuge in me" is the

English Version of Rāmānuja's Gita Bhāshyam on this verse by Mr. Sampathkumaran , p.347

## Promise breaker

There is another event in the life of Rāmānuja, that is cited as an important act of Social reform, He visited Thirukkoshtiyur Nambi several times to receive a sacred mantra from him. After taking a promise from Rāmānuja that he would not reveal this sacred mantra *"Om. Namo Nārāyanāya Namaha,"* to all, Nambi taught him the mantra. Rāmānuja is said to have gathered all people, standing on the first floor of the Thirukkoshtiyur temple and proclaimed the same to all. His teacher was annoyed and when asked why he broke the promise, Rāmānuja replied that by breaking the promise to his guru he is aware that he would go to hell, but all those who learned the sacred mantra will go to heaven. So he did it in the interest of all. His teacher is said to have been pleased. This is cited as the sterling example of Rāmānuja's social reform. The maker of this myth has done unwillingly a great damage to Rāmānuja on more than one count. If an illustrious teacher like Rāmānuja can break a promise to his own guru and act against it, other worldly men and opportunists would only take it as a best example and follow it in breaking any promise and the so called first step towards liberation, Satya (truth) will disappear from the world. For it is known worldly men follow easily the bad examples first.

## Path Aleady Open

The second point of difficulty is that the Hindus strongly believe that evil effect caused by a sin cannot be wiped out without suffering its effect. Which means that

Rāmānuja has to go to hell for having committed the sin? The myth maker has made Rāmānuja to go to hell for some time which is unthinkable.

But more than the above, long before Rāmānuja at least 500 years earlier, another Vaishnava ālvār, Thirumalisai ālvār proclaimed that if only one recites the *ashtākshara mantra "Om namo Nārāyanāya"*, he will achieve heaven. This mantra has already been open to all people for over 500 years earlier to Rāmānuja and the teacher was aware he could attain heaven without fail. By proclaiming the already well known mantra, what form of social reform Rāmānuja ushered in, which is claimed as the most outstanding social reform?

**Black out**

Further there is a perceptible attempt to block out the Saiva tradition and its contribution to social synthesis. Four hundred years earlier to Rāmānuja. Saint Appar has openly declared he would hold even a Pulaya (most despicable outcaste) as "god" if he is a devotee of the Supreme.

> *"Āvurithu Tinru uzalum pulaiyar enum*
> *Gangaivār sadai karandārku anbaragil*
> *Avar kantir nām vaṇangum kadavulāre."*

Sambandar, an younger contemporary of Appar took as his companion the outcaste "yāz player" Nilakanta yāzpānar and wherever Sambandar went Nilakanta yāzpanar accompanied him with his wife Matanga Chulāmaniyar,. At the end when Sambandar got married, Nilakanta Yāzpanar, and all those assembled there, servants, women, Vedic saints, and even those who preferred a different path to liberation, without caste creed or sex attained the same moksha as Sambandar, around 650 CE. Saint Sundaramurti tells us that the society deified Nandanar, the Thirunālai povār, the outcaste and worshipped him. Then we have the outstanding example of Kannappan a hunter. All these devotees are worshipped as deities to this day in most of the Śiva temples. Even in the Vaishnava system the story of Thiruppanālvār was deified long before Rāmānuja, evidently the paurānika myth maker, did not understand what he was foisting on Rāmānuja.

## The Obstacle

As against all this we must see what Rāmānuja himself has said about the eligibility of the Sudras to liberation,

Right from the time of the Upanishads a debate was initiated questioning restrictions on any attaining moksha. The Vyāsa's *Brahma sūtra* took up this question under a sutra called "*Apa sudrādhikaranam*" in which the suggestion is made that the Sudras are not eligible to moksha because moksha is obtained through the study of Vedas and Sudras are not allowed to study Veda.

The earliest to comment on this *sūtra* was Sankara, the Advaita exponent who said the Sudāras cannot attain moksha through the Vedas no doubt but no one can prevent them attaining moksha by listening to *Ithihāsa* and *Purānas*. The Mahābhārata declares said Sankara, that the fourth varnas should be taught Ithihaṣa and purāna and this would give them the same *Moksha* as the other ones. Sankara is often misquoted in this aspect, but he declares categorically nobody can prevent the Sudras achieving through the study of Ithihāsa. Rāmāyana and Mahābārata and the Puranas are meant for this purpose.

(*Yeshām punah purvakrita samskāravasāt Vidura Dharmavyādha prabhritinām jnānotpattih teshām na sakyate phalaprāptih pratisheddhum, jnānasya ekāntika phalatvāt. Srāvayet caturtho varnān iti ca itihāsa purānādhigame cāturvarnasya adhikārasmaranāt- Sankara*)

Contrary to popular projection Rāmānuja firmly rejects liberation of Sudras and makes no compromise. As it is found in his own writing of the Sri-Bhāshya the claim that he "made history" and ushered on a "social revolution" is a total myth. If the other interpretation of Rāmānuja in the Gita is taken as possible where it is said women and Sudras will achieve liberation that would land Rāmānuja in inconsistency in his basic philosophy which he is not. To be consistent with Rāmānuja's own stand it is clear that the so called social revolution is another myth.

In a well studied article, "the Tamil Veda of a Sudra Saint" Fredhelm Hardy has the following to say on this episode.

> "Rāmānuja's remarks on the same *sūtras* of Bādarāyana are, if anything, less compromising. Firstly he specifies unmistakably that the Sudras are not qualified for the knowledge of Brahman, just in case one might claim that such knowledge were possible outside the Vedas. Secondly, he attacks the Advaitins for being unable to prove the premise; only his system is capable of maintaining the position that Sudras do not qualify for the realization of Brahman because it avoids the internal contradiction which results from the Advaita position. Even if one ascribed such a strong Vedic position to that

period of Rāmānuja's life, which according to hagiography, preceded the joining the Vaishnava Bhakti of Yāmuna, his brief commentary on the Gita which may well belong to the later period. is so vague in (ad ix 32) that we can certainly not regard it as proof of a change in his attitude."

Hardy concludes at the end

"Nammālvār's writing could easily be proved to be superior to the Vedas. The difficulties arose when this belief wanted to express itself in social terms not merely a vague orthodoxy stood in the way of others but in a sense Rāmānuja himself."
(Contributions to South Asian Studies, Ed Gopala Krishna, OUP, Delhi 1979, p.30 -1 )

## Fighting the Ghost

So Ramauja's social reform is an added myth but distorted projection continue to glorify. Prof. Narasimhachari in a sense pointed out that "these legends were meant to create a halo around Rāmānuja as one who suffered persecution and insult and that he fought bravely and he achieved success". It is a fine example of a brave fight with a non existing ghost.! The learned Prof. concludes his write up saying "the legend of Rāmānuja continues to inspire generations of people all over the world for all time to come. Long live the glory of Rāmānuja". This would fit in with a very good propaganda literature. For an academic and objective student Rāmānuja's glory is not embedded in those self deluding legends but by his own outstanding writings.

# 6. UNDER KULOTTUNGA-I

## Introduction

The life of Rāmānuja is intimately connected with the Srirangam temple. The then Chola ruler, is said to have persecuted Rāmānuja which compelled him to go to the court of the Hoysala ruler Vishnuvardhana in disguise, and after the death of the Chola ruler return to Srirangam. Rāmānuja's date of birth is placed in circa 1017 that is in the reign of Rajendra Chola-I. If that be so, the only Chola ruler who could have persecuted him, would be Kulottunga I. Kulottunga was believed to have ruled for fifty years (1070-1120). Recently the Tamilnādu State Department of Archaeology has found an inscription which gives 55 years of rule to Kulottunga I; so he should have reigned atleast upto 1125. The legend of Rāmānuja's persecution in the hands of the Chola ruler, portrays the Chola as an antagonist of Vaishnava faith. It would therefore be interesting to study the condition of Srirangam temple under this Chola ruler to ascertain whether Srirangam temple in any way suffered in the hands of Kulottunga.

This study shows results to the contrary. Among the Chola inscriptions found in the temple, by far the largest number are in the reign of Kulottunga I. Among the 105 Chola inscriptions recorded in the temple, as many as 65 epigraphs are in the reign of Kulottunga I and 14 inscriptions are dated in the reign of Vikramachola son of, Kulottunga –I.

Which means, this temple received maximum benefactions during Rāmānuja's sojourn at Srirangam. (between 1070 to 1125).

Kulottunga's inscriptions are found from his very first year to the end of his reign. Nearly 1/3rd of the inscriptions of Kulottunga are dated between his 40th and 50th years; (1110 - 1120) that is the period when Rāmānuja is said to have been persecuted. Suffice it to say that the picture that emerges from the epigraphical study is that the period of Kulottunga I was the most prosperous period for the Srirangam temple under the Cholas country to traditional belief.

## Kulottunga's Personal Devotion

It is of great interest to note the on *pūsam,* the natal star of Kulottunga I, special festivals were instituted in the temple every month. In 1110 C.E. (46th year) Kulottunga himself purchased some land at Sriudavur, which was under *tirappu* tenure and converted it into a *devatāna iraiyili*, by paying a lumpsum amount and arranged for special festival, sacred bath and offerings on the day of *pusam*, from the 40th year of the King. Another fragmentary epigraph refers to the *pusa tirunāl* of Kulottunga performed every month. This shows Kulottunga's intimate connection with the temple of Srirangam. Two of the records, are personal orders of Kulottunga, making certain modifications in land tenure and taxes in favour of the temple. One of the queens of Kulottunga, Lokamahādevi, was a great patron of Srirangam temple. Her officers bought some lands and made a gift of them to the temple at the request of one Nārāyana-bhatta. Another royal lady, Tennavan Mahādevi, the queen of

Rājendra (probably Rājendra II) made provisions in the temple for the expenses of certain specified festivals in Kulottunga's reign. She is called Rājarājan Arulmoli alias Tennavan Mahādevi, the queen of Rājendra deva in another epigraph who also gave money for donating alms to devotees. These royal involvements in the temple show the keen interest taken by the Chola rulers in the Srirangam temple during the life time of Rāmānuja. The considered Sri Ranganātha as their family deity and the temple as their Kuladhana.

That Sri Ranganātha was called Pallikondaruliya Anantanārāyanaswāmi, in the reign of Parāntaka I, (10th century CE) mentioned in one of Kulottunga's inscription. In Kulottunga's time also, Sriranganātha was called Ananthanārayanaswāmi.

It must be noted that the name Rāmānuja does not occur either in the epigraphs of Kulottunga I, his son or his predecessors. In fact the first reference, so far as I could see, occurs in the 5th year of Rajendra Chola III 1250 A.D., nearly 125 years after Rāmānuja's demise. The inscription referring to Rāmānuja also does not mention the preceptor, but refers to a land of Rāmānuja. (*Rāmānujan currukkulai*)

## Flower Gardens

1. More than ten new flower gardens (*nandavanam*) were raised during the 30 years from 1085. Three of the gardens were endowed by ladies, one of them being a Pandya princess. A land was purchased at the instance of one Nishadarājan, and endowed for raising a flower garden in the name of the Pāndya Princess, Neriyan

Mādevi. Provisions were also made for the servents. A "Gunavalli nandavanam" was raised by a lady Gnanavalli alias Kadavur Udaiyāl, by purchasing a land which was lying fallow for over one hundred years, due to floods in Kāveri. ( A.R.E. 112–47)

A lady Siriyāndāl Sāni, daughter of Atreyan Damodara Nārāyanan, and wife of Tāyanambi Pirān, raised a flower garden in 1115. Thirumalavadi Udaiyan alias Rajavallabha Pallavaraiya Atkondavilli of Adanur, Neriyan Muvendavelān alias Vedavanamudaiyan are the other donors who raised new nandavanams. A man and his wife endowed two flower gardens in their names. He was a Commander, (Senapati) whose name was Taliyil Madhurāntaka alias Rājendra Chola Kidārattaraiyan and his wife was Rājakesarivalli. Provisions were also made for two servants to maintain the garden. Another Senāpati, Ilangovelār, purchased a land and gifted it for a nandavanam.

## Floods in Kāveri

Over nine inscriptions refer to floods in Kāveri which laid waste a huge stretch of lands. One inscription says that the land remained uncultivable for the past 50 years on account of sand silt deposited by the river Kāveri. Four inscriptions state that the lands were lying waste for over one hundred years and the next states, that the lands were fallow for long, due to sand silt spread by Kāveri. Generally, the Chola records are accurate. If we take the years 50 and 100 years recorded as nearly accurate, it would indicate that the flooding of Kāveri had occurred atleast twice in one hundred years, causing considerable damage to the fields and crops. Which means it flooded disastrously in the reign of Rajendra

I and earlier in the reign of Uttamachola. The villages which were affected were Karkudi in Vilathurnādu, Karaikuḍi in Vilanādu, Turaikkudi and Tandarai. These records also show that considerable attention was paid to the reclamation of sand silted lands along the banks of the Kāveri in the time of Kulottunga.

Eight *Kalams* of paddy per veli of land was levied per annum by the temple treasury. In another inscription the quantity is not given. The lands were purchased by individuals who brought them under cultivation and paid a certain quantity to the temple treasury towards the maintenance of the garden. All the lands sold had belonged originally to the temple but became waste lands due to inundation. Certain officers of Kulottunga's queen Lokamādevi bought such lands on behalf of the queen and brought them under cultivation. The lands bought remained free of all taxes for the first five years from the year of purchase and there after levied tax to be paid to the temple treasury. This was an inducement to the new cultivator. We note that one *Veli* of sand-silted land was sold at one kāsu per *Veli* in Kulottunga' reign. But in the reign of the same ruler (1085) one *Veli* of land was sold for two *kāsu*, which seemed to be the rate for cultivatable land.

## Land tenure

There are three interesting records in the reign of Kulottunga relating to land tenure. In the year 1084 Kulottunga ordered certain modifications in the levy of paddy to be paid to the temple treasury. In 1110. Kulottunga ordered the conversion of a *tirappu* tenure on certain lands at Sirudavur into a *devatāna* tenure by payment of a lumpsum and utilise the same for the sacred bath of deity. The third transaction relates to a village assembly. The *Perunguri Sabhā*, (village assembly) converted a *iraiyili* tenure (tax free tenure) into a *irai kāval* tenure in 1072 and for 40 years it continued to remain an *iraikāval* tenure. But in 1114 it was again reconverted into a iraiyili tenure.

There is an interesting inscription which deserves mention. The sabhā of Chandralekhai Chaturvedimangalam (Sendalai) borrowed 400 *kalānju* from this temple in the year 916 (of Parāntaka Chola), but it did not pay the interest till the 10th year of Kulottunga I, for 165 years. The sabhā sold 6 Velis of land towards the interest on this sum, and the land was designated as *Poliyuttuparru* (i.e. land to pay interest).

One Thiru Anandamurti Arulālan alias Virarājendra Pallavaraiyan bought some land and constituted it as a *Brahmādeya* called Aindambakkilān *Brahmādeyam* after his own name in 1094 Another land gift was endowed by Vandālanjeri Udaiyān Vellālan alias Vānakovaraiyan of Thirunaraiyur. The proceeds were to be utilised for the sacred bath of the deity on the day of Ekādasi. The donor was from the same Vandalanjeri, from where Karunākara Tondaimān, the general of Kulottunga, who conquered Kalinga on behalf of his ruler hailed from. Vānakovaraiyan was second in command to Karunākara Tondaimān and accompanied him to Kalinga. He is celebrated along with Karunākara Tondaimān in *Kalingathupparani* of Jayamkondār.

## Devoted Chieftains

The following are the chieftains who took keen interest in Srirangam temple in the reign of Kulottunga.

1. Adittanār alias Kādavarāya
2. Villavarayar
3. Sadaiyan Sendan
4. Pārthivendra Brāhmādirāyan
5. Kaduvangudaiyān Ādittan Thiruvarangadevan alias Virudarāja Bhayankara Vijayapālan
6. Rājendra Muvendavelār
7. Ponnambala Kūttan alias Kālingarāyar
8. Isvarakulakāla Brahmārāyar
9. Rājendrachola Adiyamān alias Araiyan Sevan
10. Udaiyār Kārānai Vilupparaiyar
11. Thirumalapādi alias Rājavallabha Pallavaraiyan.
12. Neriyan Mūvendavelān alias Vedavanamudaiyān
13. Nishadarājan
14. Rājendra Chola Mahābali-vānādhirājan
15. Thiruvanantamūrti Arulālan alias Virarājendra Pallavaraiyan
16. Kottūr udaiyān Araiyan Rājendra Cholan
17. Rājendra Chola Munaiyadaraiyan
18. Kārānai Viupparaiyar
19. Ātkondavilli of Adanụr

## Devoted Commanders

Besides the above chieftains mentioned, six Commanders of Kulottunga I, are seen actively promoting the interest of the temple and endowing lands to the temple. They are:—

1. Senāpatikal Rājanārāyana munaiyadaraiyan
2. Senāpati kulasekharan
3. Senāpatikal Taliyil Madurāntakan
4. Senāpati ILangovelān
5. Vanlālanceri udaiyan Vellālan alias Vānakovaraiyan
6. Kottur udaiyān Āyarkolundu Cakrapāni

Among the above commanders the last mentioned was a Vellāla, while Senāpati Kulasekarakon was a shepered, who had risen to the status of a commander.

## Financial transactions

A record dated in the reign of Kulottunga I refers to arrears amounting to 940 *kāsu* payable by some individuals to the temple treasury. An Officer Rājendrachola Muvendavelār is said to have enquired into the case and settled the amount. One of the individuals involved in the case seems to have served a period of imprisonment *(Sirai Irundu)*.(3) Another record of interest refers to the coin *Drammas*. Four velis of land (fallow) were bought for a sum of two hundred and twenty *Drammas*. The *Drammas* is probably the name derived from Drachmas of the Roman coinage. (4)

Another interesting record refers to one Thiruvarangadevan who was a barber (ambattan) as a signatory of a document.

The study of Srirangam epigraphs of the time of Kulottunga-I, the personal interest of the king in the temple, the devotion of the queens and their endowments, the provisions for the recitation of *Thiruvāimoli* twice in the same reign, the endowments of flower gardens the reclamation of silted lands, institution of festivals etc., show a period of great activity in the temple and its prosperous condition which is totally at variance with the popular notion and belief.

## Administration under Kulottunga I

According to the traditional account Rāmānuja was born in 1017 and lived for 120 years and so his demise should have come in 1137 CE. He should have remained active between 1070 (Kulothung's accession) and 1135 (Vikramachola's rule) From the inscriptions we learn that the administration of the Srirangam temple was under the direct control of the Chola King supervised through his royal officers. The names of successive officers (*adhikārikal*) are available upto the 1135. The administration of the Srirangam temple was broadly under two groups called *Srivaishnava Vāriyam* and the other Sri *Bandāra Vāriyam* Sri Vaishnavas were the those in charge of rituals while the Bhandāra *Vāriyam* were treasurers, The names of the Srivaishnava Vāriyars in charge of rituals and the *Bhandāra* vāriyars in charge of treasury and also the Accountant of Srivaishnava vāriyars, and the accountant of the treasury are mentioned in many inscriptions from 1070 to 1135. First of all, these two functions were kept separate throughout & never brought under one. In none of them we have the name of Rāmānuja, or Kūrattālvān or Mudaliyāndan figuring as claimed. The historical documents do not support the history of Rāmānuja acting as *Sri Kārya* or the treasurer of Srirangam temple. In fact there is no reference to Rāmānuja at all in Srirangam inscriptions during his life time, till we come to the 12th cent and there is just one reference to his influence in the 13th cent. His name begins to appear from the 14th cent but even then not in any prominent way.

It is seen from the records that the Cholas treated Srirangam with great respect and administered it as a royal temple, through royal officers appointed as Srikāryam. Srirangam temple was directly under the administrative control of the Chola King. That being the case there is no question of Rāmānuja being persecuted either by Kulottunga Chola I, or his son Vikrama Chola.

The procedures adopted in Srirangam temple as found in the inscriptions are valuable in this regard and is examined here. The inscriptions taken for a study of this type range from Kulottunga I to Kulottunga III which covers about one hundred and fifty years that is 1070 to 1220 AD. This is also the most active period in the life of Rāmānuja when he is said to have reformed the administration. In most cases the temple administration was undertaken by the following functioneries:-

1. Sri Kāryam
2. Sri Vaishnava Vāriyam
3. Sri Bandāra Vāriyam

4. **Sri Vaishnava vāriya kanakku**
5. **Bhandāra Vāriya kanakku and**
6. **Representative of the Sri Vaishnavas of 18 regions**

A record of Kulottunga chola III (no 133 Srirangam temple inscriptions ) which calls the temple the property of the Cholas (*Kulottunga chola devarkku kula dhanamāy varukira Koyil)* It is remarkable because all inscriptions of Vikrama Chola refer to Chidambaram as *'Kulanāyakam'* of the Cholas. It shows that both the Natarāja of Chidambaram and the Sri Ranganātha of Srirangam were considered the family deities of the Cholas. It accounts for the reason why the temple of Srirangam is called the Koyil by the Vaishnavas and the Natarāja temple is called the Koyil by the Saivas as these temples were literally the royal temples.

Naturally the administration of Srirangam temple was directly under the Cholas and executed by the officers appointed directly by the king. They were of the cadre of Senapati and such high ranks and functioned as Srikāryams. The had royal titles like Brahmādhirajar, Nishadarajar and so on. A point of interest is that in most cases they were appointed for a term of one year only sometimes two and only rarely for three years. The srikāryams throughout the period of 150 years under discussion were the appointees of the kings at Srirangam, The inscriptions also make it clear that all the orders relating to important decisions in the srirangam temple were carried out as per the orders of the sri kāryam (*Eval padi*)

The following is the list of Sri kāryam Officers who administered th Srirangam temple during the reign of Kulottunga I and his son Vikrama chola. The first column gives the name of the officers, the second the regnal year of the king and the third the number of the inscription in the SII Volume on Srirangam for reference. From number 30 onwards the names of the Ofiicers belonged to the period of Vikrama chola. It may be seen that all these Officers were direct appointees of the king and belonged to Brāhmana, Kshatriya and Vellāla Castes and there was no preference for any one caste in the appointments. At no point of time or year do Rāmānuja, Kūrattālvān, Mudali Āndān or any of Rāmānuja's disciples figure as Srikāryam

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Sri Sankara Nāryāna Bhattan | Kulottunga I | 24 |
| 2. … Nishadarājar | ? | 25 |
| 3. ,,, Adhikārikal | ? | 32 |
| 4. Muvendavelār | ? | 34 |
| 5. Nārāyana Bhattar | ? | 36 |
| 6. Vira Viccadara Muvenda velār | ? | 45 |
| 7. Nārāyana Bhattar | 13 | 54 |
| 8. Nārāyana Bhattar of Karipuram | 13 | 54 |
| 9. Nishadarāyar | 15 | 58 |
| 10. Nishadarāyar | 15 | 59 |
| 11. Adhikārikal Nishadarāyar | 15 | 61 |
| 12. Karipurattu Nārāyana Bhattar | 19 | 64 |
| 13. Vira viccadara Muvendavelār | 20 | 65 |
| 14. Cholasikhamani Muvendavelār | 21 | 67 |
| 15. Isvara kulakāla Brahmādirajār | 22 | 68 |
| 16. Adikārikal Virachola Muvendavelār | 24 | 69 |
| 17. Rajendra Muvendavelār | 25 | 72 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18. | Ālattur udaiyān | 31 | 77 |
| 19. | Bhuvani Nārāyana Muvendavelān | 39 | 84 |
| 20. | Bhuvani Nārāyana Muvendavelān | 39 | 85 |
| 21. | Bhuvani Nārāyana Muvendavelān | 40 | 86 |
| 22. | Bhuvani Nārāyana Muvendavelān | 40 | 88 |
| 23. | Pārtivendra Brahmādirāyar | 41 | 91 |
| 24. | Pārtivendra Brahmādirāyar | 41 | 93 |
| 25. | Pārtivendra Brahmādirāyar | 42 | 96 |
| 26. | Talaiccengādu Sirilango battan | 43 | 99 |
| 27. | Nitta vinoda Muvendavelān | 44 | 100 |
| 28. | Nitta vinoda Muvendavelān | 44 | 102 |
| 29. | Pulivalam Udaiyān | ? | 110 |
| 30. | Vijayālaya Vilupparaiyan Vikrama | 3 | 111 |
| 31. | Vijayalaya Vilupparaiyan | 3 | 112 |
| 32. | ValavaNārāyana Muvendavelān | 8 | 113 |
| 33. | ValavaNārāyana Muvendavelān | 10 | 117 |
| 34. | Rājaviccadira Brahmādirājan | 12 | 118 |
| 35. | Rājaviccadira Brahmādirājan | 13 | 119 |
| 36. | Rājaviccaidira Brahmādirājan | 15 | 120 |
| 37. | Vālinatu Muvaraiyan | 15 | 121 |

### Sri Vaishnava Vāriyam

The Sri Vaishnava Vāriyam was the next important functionary group of the administration. This consisted of six elected representatives of the worshipping priests. A study of the names as recorded in different transactions reveal that they were also elcted only for one year and replaced annually by new representatives.For the first one hundred and thirty years from 1070 of Kulottunga's I rule we see that the elected Vāriyars served for one year only as per their attested their signatures in the records. Each year we find new member names. Occasionally an Officer who served earlier reappears that too for one year only. All the six members so elected were to sign documents executed during their tenure. The following were the six such representatives of Srivaishṇava Vāriyam mentioned in the record in one year and in the next year there was another set of vāriyars.

1. Alagiya manavāla Nambi
2. Thiruvāykulam udaiya Nambi
3. Sri Rāma Nambi
4. Senbaka Nārāyana Nambi
5. Vadagopuram udaiya Nambi
6. Vira Nārāyana purattu Ayan

**Another set of vāriyars.**

1. Van-Tuvarāpati Nambi
2. Varahūr Vaishnava-dāsar
3. Thirunādudaia Nambi
4. Vadagopuram Udaya Nambi
5. Thiruvāypadi dasa etc.

It is evident from these records and names that neither Rāmānuja nor Kūrattālvān or Mudali āndān figure as Srikāryams or on either Vaishnava Vāriyams or Bandāra Vāriyams during his life time in the temple.

### Bandāra Vāriyam

The Bandāra Vāriyams also consisted of six representatives but it seems the Vāriyars in this case were not changed and they served for several years at a stretch. The specific duration of their services is not discernible but some appear even for more than forty years. For example one Sri Rāghavan is mentioned as the Bandara Vāriyam from the reign of Kulottunga I to the beginning of Kulottunga II.

The following are the Bandāra Vāriyars mentioned in the inscriptions:

1. Thiruvāykulam udaiyān Sri Rāman
2. Kurukai kāvalan Ārāvāmudu
3. Kesavan Tāli Ilamsingan
4. Kuttan Thiruvenkatam
5. Kesavan Arivariyān and
6. Ārāvamudu Sri Rāman.

Many of these are seen in later inscriptions as well. Here too neither Rāmānuja nor Kūrattālvān nor Mudaliyāndān make it to the list.

Thus this study shows that the administrative arrangements mentioned in the *Koyil Olgu* are not sustainable as historical documents when weighed against the overwhelming evidence of the inscribed documentary records. The accounts of *Koyil Olugu* relate to events several centuries later and are not contemporary with Rāmānuja.

The Mackenzie manuscripts contain several records of temples that state the details of their administration in the beginning of 19th cent as required by the British administrators, like the Documents *"Pālayappattukal Vamsāvali"* no 3329, 3330 etc. as in the case Aprameya swami temple, Kannapuram, Vikrama cholisvaram temple devasthanam etc. A point of interest in these is that all these were signed by 2, 3 or four persons who agreed to the content of the record as authentic. So the account of the *"Koyil Olugu"* at Srirangam recorded in the presence of temple functionaries, reveal the same format as required by the Collectors and evidently record 19th cent customs. The The strong Tenkalai hold over the temple in the 19th Century has certainly coloured the *Koil Olugu* inputs.

The Srirangam temple did not have any Sri Kāryam appointee of the Chola Emperor after Kulottunga III (around 1225) as their power had started waning. Towards the end of Kulottunga III the Srikāryam post is in the name Senapati ālvār (in the name of Senai Mudaliyār – Vishvaksena symbolically considered the administrator. The Srivaishnava Vāṛiyam is not mentioned but instead *Srivaishnava Kankāni* is seen. The administration seems to be in the hands or Sri *Vaishnava Kanhāni* ceyvar and *Mudal karanattār* indicating a change in the temple administration. (no 149) The name Peirya Nambi seems to be important in the time of Kulottunga III's son and successor Rājarājaja III and in the time of his son Rājendra chola III the administration goes into the hands Srivaishnavas.(no 167)

Nearly 50 years after Jatāvarman Sundarapāndya (1261 AD) in the year 1307 during the reign of Virapāndya One Kalingarāyan purchased a land and established a

Brahmin settlement named Kodandarāma caturvedimangalam. The request for this came from Ranganārāyana dāsan, the Srkāryam Periya perumāl dāsan, the kottus of Kovanavas, Kudavars, Talai eduppār (cultivators), Pādvars, and also the Rāmānujan udaiyars and other *kottus* and the proposal was approved. The list included among the Kottus. Rāmānujan udaiyārs who thus seems to have continued to have existed. Again it is seen the Administration has not gone into the hands of Rāmānujan udiayārs who are mentioned as one among the many *kottus* (no 212) Thus it seems the Temple remained an independent entity and was not under Rāmānuja Followers.

Kulottunga, infact, gave many gifts to Vishnu temples of Srirangam, Kanchi and Thiruvengatam, all through his regin. In the Ulakalanda perumāl temple at Kanchi he ceremoniously gifted into the hands of the Diety an entire village for its worship expenses.

For the most part of Kulottunga's reign – *Bandara vāriyan* was one Sri Rāghavan Kārimāran and not the nominee of Rāmānuja.

## Kulottunga II

Some would blame Kulottunga Chola II, who came to the throne in 1136, when Rāmānuja was already 119 years of age. For he is said to have fled to Melkote in Mysore when the king started his prsecution and stayed there for twelve years and returned when the king died.So the persecution could not have taken place when Rāmānuja was at the fag end of his life. It could not have taken place in the hands of Kulottunga II too, if the traditional date of birth of

Rāmānuja is taken as 1017. Further Kulottunga was not a fanatic for in his inscriptions and there are many, he likens himself to Vishnu. Also his inscriptions are found in Srirangam, Kanchi, Varadarāja and other Vishnu temples of Kanchi. Also the *"Karnataka Rajakkal Savistara Caritam"* written under the orders of Collector Macleod says that the icon of Lord Govindarāja of Chidambaram was carried by a boat through the sea to Thiruppati by a Dāsi named Tillai, where she got it installed and where it was still under worship in 1808. The historicity of Rāmānuja's persecution therefore becomes untenable and can at best be treated as "*Rāmānuja Purāṇam*".

An inscription of Kulottunga II is found in the Srirangam temple on the south wall of the second prākāra, which is dated 1140 CE. The *prasasti* part of the record identifies him with Vishnu- Thirumāl (*Thirumal ivan*). This is not the only place where he gives this phrase to himself. Hundreds of his inscription found all over Tamilnad identify him with Thirumal. This is proof enough to show he was not anti Vaishnavite.

As Kulottunga Chola II is said to have removed the idol of Govindaraja in the Chidambaram temple and consigned it to the sea it is claimed that, he should have been the persecutor of Rāmānuja. In the Vaikunta Perumāl temple Kanchi there is a damaged image of a 16th cent Vishnu lying in the prākāra. It was an ancient custom to immerse all the *bhinna* idols (Broken Images) in deep sea or tanks or other water bodies.

It is possible that as the original Govindarāja made of stuccs was damaged it has to be replaced. In a good number of Vishnu temples of Tamilnadu. The present main image of

Vishnu made of stone belongs to 16th Cent, of the vijayanagara age. The earlier images has been replaced. Also many Vishnu images were made of either wood stucco which required replacement. As such a sitation might have caused the replacement which was poetically described as Vishnu being sent to the ocean his original abode which, should be viewed in that perspective and not as an anti Vaishnavite act. Whatever the case may be as Rāmānuja did not live in the time of Kulottunga II, his persecution at the hand of this king cannot be anything other than pure and simple myth. Further traditional accounts call the king as Krimikanda Chola or Pulunan which obviously is a concocted name. It is known to historians that there was no Krimikanda Chola in the long list of Chola emperors available in thousands of records. Rāmānuja's persecution is an out and out myth and should be consigned to the sea of myths and legends.

It must be remembered that in most of the famous temples of Vishnu, the Mūlasthāna images are of the age of Vijayanagar, 16th Cent, as at the Pārthasārathi Swami temple of Thiruvallikkeni, the Varadarāja Temple of Kanchi, the Sundaravarda temple of Uttaramerur, and so on. What happened to the original images of these temples? who removed them?

### Rājarāja II

Kulottunga's son and successor was Rājarāja Chola II the builder of Darasuram temple.He had the title Rājagambhira and built the third enclosure of the Srirangam temple which is aptly called to this day the *Rajagambhiran Thiruvithi*. During his reign the king of Malainādu (Kerala) Kodai Ravivarman gifted a golden lamp on stand (kuttu vilakku) to be burnt constantly in front of Sri Ranganātha and he also gifted 633 gold coins which were brought by some Royal Officers to Srirangam. According to this record the same was ordered to be engraved on the south wall as instructed by Emperumānār. (Insc.No 125). This inscription is dated 1156 in the reign of Rājarāja II. It was customary those days to issue all orders in the name of the God who was mentioned as Alagiya Manavālapperumāl.Also the term Emperumān is used to denote Rāmānuja, and so the inscription stating as per the wish of Emperumānār may be taken to refer to Rāmānuja. If this interpretation is accepted then it would mean Rāmānuja was alive at that time. That would make us believe that Rāmānuja was still living around 1156 and was wielding considerable influence over the temple

Unfortunately this view would pose two problems If Rāmānuja was living around that time then his date of birth could not be 1017 as claimed by all writers, if he had passed away in 1137 the date of this inscription would fall about 25 years later. He is also not mentioned before or after this record till we come to the 13th cent. At this stage the only possibility is that the word Emperumānār was used in this inscription to denote Sri Ranganātha himself and not Rāmānuja. At the end of the record it says "this deed was graciously approved by the Emperumānār and the gold was entered into the treasury. The name Emperumānar was a common name then for Rāmānuja's own disciple who was called Arulālaperumāl Emperumān. Rāmānuja himself got the name Emperumān from the name of God.If on the other hand it is considered the name of Rāmānuja only then his whole life history should be revised? If it refers to Rāmānuja then it would be the earliest Epigraphical reference to Rāmānuja.

# 7. RĀMĀNUJA'S REFORM OF SRIRANGAM KOTTU.

Among the notable deeds of Sri Rāmānuja at Srirangam, one relates to the reform of Temple functions called *kottu*. He, as a Srikāryam of the temple, is said to have thoroughly reformed the *kottu*. A Srirangam epigraph furnishes an important information about the reorganization of the Srirangam temple *kottu*. The inscription is found on the south wall of the Chandana mandapa and is dated in the reign of Jatavarman Sundara Pāṇḍya . It mentions his order in the year 1261 CE (AD) which was very close to the time of Rāmānuja and falls within about 100 years and may be said to reflect the true conditions that prevailed in the SriRanganātha temple. There are differences of opinion among scholars about the exact date of Rāmānuja; some ascribe to him the period 1017 to 1137 while others hold that he lived between 12th and 13th cent. There is no evidence so far adduced to date Rāmānuja to a later period.

According to *Koyil Olugu*, Rāmānuja was appointed as *Srikāryam* at Sri Rangam temple and with the help of Kūrattālavān and Mudaliyāndan administered the temple and examined the treasury etc. *'Koyil olugu* – (p. 267-268).

The *Koyil Olugu-* suggests that Lord Ranganātha himself was not in favour of the administration passing on to Rāmānuja so much so Rāmānuja told Kūrattālvān that the Lord appeared in his dream and was favouring Nambi who was an enemy of them. Rāmānuja was disappointed and depressed and left for Thiruvellarai where he lived for two years.

Also it is claimed that Rāmānuja examined the treasury and reorganized the same etc. These are administrative transactions that are to be reflected in the documents which are the axailble inscriptions, published in S.I.I. Volume on Sri Rangam. A very clear picture is available in these inscriptions, especially during the life time of Rāmānuja. So we may examine the inscription from historic angle.

## Māravarman Sundara 1225 (Emperumān Thiruvadi)

In the ´reign of Māravarman Sundara Pāndya, who returned the Chola country, a record dated in 1225 (no 192 of Srirangm inscription) refers to a transaction in which the following representatives participated.

1. Jiyar Nārāyana dāsar
2. Alakiya Chola Brahmā Mārāyan who had rights over the temple *(Koyil kūr udaiyān)*
3. Vaishnavas of the main temple *(Periya Thiruppati)*
4. The men carrying out different works like repairs etc *(Thiruppani ceyyum panimakkal)*
5. Sri Bhāgavata nambimārs

6. Members of Srirangam Village assembly
7. The reciters of Tamil thiruppatiyams *(Thiruppatiāyam vinnappam ceyyum Nambimārs)*
8. Sri Padam tukkum nambimars (Carriers of deities in procession)
9. The Ārya Bhatās of the gates
10. The Sri Vaishnavas who have taken refuge in the sacred feet of Emperumānār
11. A representative of the 18 regions *(pathinen mandalattu Srivaishnavas)* who come to witness the festivals.

All of them assembled in the Rājagambhiran street and undertook the decision.

In this record a group of persons have been referred to as *Emperumānār Thiruvadiāyai āsrayittu iruukum Srivaishnavas*. Here Emperumānar could be taken as a reference to Rāmānuja. The record is dated in 1225 Obviously Rāmānuja is no more then and the record is dated 100 years later than him.It might probably refer to those looking after the Samādhi of Sri Rāmānuja. This would show that even 100 years after Rāmānuja the followers of Rāmānuja were only a small section in the temple. It also shows neither Srirangam temple nor all Srivaishnavas were followers of Rāmānuja then.

**Jatāvarman Sundara Pāndya - I (1251)**

The mediaeval Pāndya ruler, Sundara Pāndya the most powerful ruler known to history, in his two inscriptions clearly mentions the reforms he carried out in the administrative set up of the temple (nos 202 and 203 of

Srirangam Inscriptions) In the first order dated 1261 he sent his orders to the Sthānapati of the temple stating that prior to this date the management of the temple had been in the hands of Kovanavar category of Kottu of temple functionaries and this was to be discontinued with immediate effect. From his tenth year different categories of kottus should be represented in the management. The gold Treasury was to protected by the Ārya bhatāls and also the local people of this village. (this was a direct order of the king) (203, of SII XXIV).

The Pāṇḍya ruler mentioned here contributed immensely to the Srirangam temple and no other king comes anywhere close. He was also very close to Rāmānuja's period and we may be justified in expecting the reforms of Rāmānuja reflected in his royal edicts. Sundara Pāṇḍya covered the temple Vimāna with Gold and assumed the title "The King who covered the temple with gold" "*Koyil pon meynta perumāl*". Thirty nine Sanskrit verses inscribed on the walls list his contribution to this temple. They are inscribed on the northern wall of the second prākāra of the temple. They give details of the parts of the existing temple portions he renovated and covered with gold; the parts he newly built, the details of jewels he made and gifted to Ranganātha and Alagiya manavāla perumāl for their decoration and the gift of Vahanas and palanquins he presented and so on. The same verses also detail the lands he gifted to the temple for meeting the expenses of worship and festivals. His lavish gifts made Srirangam temple the richest in the south. An enormous amount of wealth lay now accumulated in the temple. The king therefore felt concerned about their proper management and utilization. At that time the administration of the temple was under the Srivaishnava *kottu*. *Kottu* is the administrative group of functionaries looking after specific tasks in the temple. When Sundara Pāṇḍya made the gift there were ten people (representatives) of this group who were supervising the administration of all functions. Sundara Pāṇḍya felt that representatives of all the *kottu* in the temple should be involved in the supervision of the temple management. The inscription mentioned at the beginning refers to the order of the king involving other *kottu* also and reducing the number of representatives from the original *kottus* to two from ten. He issued an order in his tenth ruling year that the functions so far looked after by the temple Srivaishnava *kottu* should now include all other *kottus* and the administration should be conducted with out any shortcomings.

This order of the king was read before the deity Sri Ranganātha and as per His will the following changes were effected. At this stage the inscription says that Koyil executive officers Kurukulattaraiyar, and Sri RangaNārāyana dāsar, informed before the presence of God, when he was in his sleeping chamber with his two consorts. It was customary those days for all important decisions and communication to be read before the God as if he was being informed about everything and the orders and resolutions also would be read out as they were issued by the God himself. The inscription would begin as if it was an order issued by the God himself. The present inscription is such an order.

The inscription then goes on to record that :-

> "the representatives of the Kovanavar group of our house (temple) were controlling so far the functions of our house, kitchens, of houses dear to us.(shrines of

secondary deities), of our groves and gardens, and the services of our men.

But now the Pāṇḍya Sundara has expanded the functioning of our temple greatly, gifted lands for our kitchen, Kālyana festivals, and covered the Sri Vimāna of our temple with gold as also, the enclosure and gopura. He has gifted jewels for us to wear, and presented to us vahanas to ascend during procession, and has made many golden contributions.

He has now sent his orders to us stating that he has examined the procedures of supervision and decided that a total of ten representatives from all groups of *kottu* should henceforth be supervised as follows :-

1 Two representatives from "*Kovanavar*" group who were so far supervising all the works

2. Two Bhaṭṭas from "*Sri Ranga-maraiyor*" group (*kottu*)

3. One representative from our "*Totavatti tū-maraiyor*" who are our assembly members

4. Two members from the group of cultivators of our lands "*Talaiyiduvār*"

5. One representative from Āryas (Bhaṭas) who protect our entrances.

6 Two representatives of the flower gardeners who are called the "*Aratta mukki anukkar*"

This would make a total of ten representatives. This shows that in the 13th cent there were six main groups of *kottu* functionaries in the Srirangam temple who were in charge of different tasks. This record shows how each group was to be represented in the temple control. The original group of Kovanavar who had ten representatives were now reduced to two to include all groups which included gardeners and land cultivators. Evidently the king felt that the responsibility to govern the temple should be given to all groups so that there would be greater vigilance and equitable care of all functions for the harmonious working of the temple. This was necessitated by the enormous amount of wealth acquired by the temple which could not be entrusted to only one group. The order was issued at the request of Sri Ranganārāyana dāsar, the Srikāryam Kurukulattaraiyar, Kovanavar, and Kutavar. There are a few points that require attention. In this order there is no refernce to *"Sri Emperumānarai (Rāmānujarai) asrayittirukkam "Sri Vaishnava Kottu"* mentioned in the earlier record of Maravarman Sundara Pāṇḍya where different kottus are mentioned including the one of *'Emperumānarai Āsrayittiruppor'*. If the name Emperumānar is taken to refer to Rāmānuja in the ealier records (1225) it means they are no more involved in the temple administration 40 years later in 1260 though Ranganārāyana dasar figures in it. Probably Ranganārāyana dasar stayed then independent of them.

The order that appears to be that of Sri Ranganātha reads that "People should examine the functioning of the temple and should conduct affairs without any shortcoming. In this manner the order should be drafted on palm leaf and should be inscribed on the stone walls".

This deed is seen signed by the officers of the Pāṇḍya king, who held the post of *Thirumandira olai nāyakam*, Pallavan vizhupparaiyan alias Kannudaiyan of Puducceri. From this record it is clear that as the wealth and functions in a temple increase the administration should be widely and equally distributed for greater accountability.

This record also raises some issues of vital importance. We have seen that the Vaishnava historians hold that Rāmānuja reorganized the *kottu* into ten 'which was considered his greatest contribution, but this record shows that within hundred years of Rāmānuja the main *kottu* representation has been reduced to two and it was Sundara Pāṇḍya, the greatest benefactor of the Srirngam temple who reformed the *kottu.* Does it mean Rāmānuja's reforms had to be overhauled within such a short time? Also we may see there is no mention of Rāmānuja's reformation of the control, or any of Rāmānuja's nominees. This issue needs some objective examination. Or is it that Rāmānuja suggested ten representatives from the Kovanavar (Srivaishnavas) which his biographers mistook as *kottu.*? It seems Rāmānuja's reformation of Srirangam of *kottu*s also falls within the realm of mythical narration.

## Vira Pāṇḍya 1307 (Rāmānujan Kottu)

Another direct reference to Rāmānuja appears at Srirangam in the time of Virapāṇḍya and is dated in 1307 CE. It relates to the gift of house sites to 32 Bhaṭṭas, in Kaliyugarāma Caturvedimangalam. It was made when the deity was seated on the throne named 'Sundara Pāṇḍya' under the pearl canopy called SundaraPāṇḍya, in the abhesheka mandapa of the temple during the festival of Kartikai, when the god was listening to the poems of Satagopa (recitation of Nammālvār's Tiruvāymoli). The land was purchased from the Bhaṭṭas of Vikrama Chola Caturvedimangalam, 32 houses constructed and gifted to some Bhaṭṭas. This was done at the request of Ranganārāyana dāsar, and Periya perumāl dasar who was looking after the affairs of the temple, the Kovanavas of the temple, Kulavas, singers, Ṭalai Eduppār and those belonging to Rāmānujan kottu (followers of Rāmānujas) and others who are said to be the various *Kottu* groups functioning in the temple. The order is said to be issued by Lord Sri Ranganātha himself. In the order the Lord says "Our Rāmānuja", which shows that Rāmānujan kottu was mentioned as a functionary of the temple. As mentioned earlier the inscription is dated 1307 when Rāmānuja was no more and that only one group among many *kottus* of the temple were devoted to Rāmānuja and that too seemed to be insignificant as it is mentioned in a cursory manner. The tenor of the inscription is clear that this *kottu* of Rāmānuja was one among the many *Kottus* functioning in the temple and that the entire temple had not gone under the control of Rāmānuja devotees. Evidently the administration of the temple never passed on to Rāmānuja during his life time as claimed by later biographers.

The Ranganārāyana dāsar mentioned in the record was not connected with the lineage of Rāmānuja, but an important Jiyar in the temple to be first mentioned with respect in the record. Another connected record relating to the same transaction refers to him as "jiyar". The Jiyar is different from the Kottu of Rāmānujan. It is possible that the Rāmānuja *Kottu* related to those who were looking after the

Samādhi of Rāmānuja, which at that point of time was outside the temple premises.

This is an important inscription from another angle. One of the stipulation in the record says if any wants to sell the share to one other than the share holders he must sell it only to a person of "our darsana" (*nam darsana*). This means the land should not be sold to outside the *Vaishnava darsana*. Among those who represented this request to the King were Ranganānyana Dasa, Periya perumāl dasar, Kovanavar, Kudavar, Paduvars, Talai eduppar, and followers of Rāmānuja *(Rāmānujan udāiyarkal)* and other *Kottus* of the temple. That shows that there were many groups and the followers of Rāmānuja was one group. Also the inscription makes it clear that the order was issued by all the *bhrityas* of Sri Ranganātha. So the word *nam darsana* shows it was the *Vaishnava darsana* in geneal and does not mention that it was *Rāmānuja darsana,* for the followers of Rāmānuja were only one among them. We have seen that the record is dated 1307. So even by the beginning of 1300, the followers of *Rāmānuja darsana* were one out of the ten *Kottus* groups. It seems to suggest that the followers of Rāmānuja were a small group even in the beginning of the 1300, and that Rāmānuja's pjilosophy has not taken over completely the earlier Sri Vaishnava school and so the claim that the whole of Vaishnava world has accepted Rāmānuja as their singular Āchārya has no basis. (212/SII xxiv)

We may also take a small diversion here towards a statistical analysis. In the formative stages of this philosophy the Brahmins played a prominent role. The Population of Brahmins at any point of time was only 4or 5 percent of the total Hindu Population.The present rate is almost the same.There were three major groups among the Brahmin population, viz the Śiva Brāhmanas, who formed a considerable group as there were thousands of temples spread over the entire length and breadth; the Smārtha Brahmans who were the adherents of Vedic tradition.; and the third were the Srivaishnavas. The Saiva group was prominent because they went beyond the Śiva temples and did worship in the temple of Goddesses and temples of other Village gods as well. As the Vaishnavas restricted themselves only to Vishnu temples their percentage was smaller the Ādisaivas might have been about 1/3 of the the Brahmin population, The Smarta 1/3 and the Vaishnavas 1/3 of the of the population This one third ratio is out of the 4% of the total Hindu population. Which means the there should have been hardly 1% out of the total population that would have been the population of Vaishnava Brahmanas. But there ought to have been some followers outside Brahmin community also like the Yādavas following the Vaishnava system. By and large the general trend was barring the *Ekanta bhaktas*, that exclusive worshippers of Vishnu, the general population was cosmopolitan in their approach. We may be sure that out of the total population there would have been hardly 5% followers of the Vira Vaishnava system. The *Rāmānuja darsana* was obviously influential among these five percent population. There is no accurate statistics about various denominational groups but one may hold this is probably the general picture. The picture that emerges from the Srirangam inscription quoted above shows that even among the population of Vaishnavas the followers of Rāmānuja were one tenth of them around the year 1300. That is 160 years after the demise of the Acharya deserve certainly notice. The influence of Rāmānuja was gradaula and reached a greater momentum from the later half of 14th cent in Tamilnadu and a part of Karnataka.

# 8. RĀMĀNUJA BHĀSHYA VRITTI - 1316

In his work on Varadarājaswami temple, Dr. K.V. Raman has analysed in a succinct, and competent manner, the epigraphic records and given a connected history. In this work he has accepted the traditional date of birth of Srimad Rāmānuja,

"Rāmānuja was born in Sriperumpur in 1017 AD. His father imparted to him preliminary education. After his father's death, Rāmānuja moved to Kanchi, along with his mother. There is a tradition that he lived in the first house on the north-western end of the Sannidhi street on the east of the temple. He studied Vedānta under Yādava prakāsa, a great Advaitic scholar at Kanchi" (Prof. Raman, pb2).

Raman also gives the death of Rāmānuja as 1138 AD. Till very recent times, the Srivaishnavas held that the Chola ruler Kulottunga I, was against Srivaishnavism. I have now shown that Kulottunga I was a very great devotee of Vishnu, which shows up the absurdity behind the persecution theory.

Now on to the deification of Rāmānuja in the Varadarāja temple. Prof. Raman again has drawn our attention to an inscription in the Varadarāja temple in which he finds a reference to an image of Rāmānuja set up in the temple. It is no doubt an important inscription for the history of Sri Vaishnavism and so Raman's view are given below.

"In recognition of his great services, Rāmānuja was deified in the Varadarāja Swami temple within 55 years of his demise. This is attested by a record of Kulottunga III, dated 1191 which informs us that an influential Chola Cheiftain by name Ilayālvān Kālingarāyan of Nettur, consecrated the image of Emperumānār (Rāmānuja), and donated all the taxes accruing from two villages to meet the expenses for the offerings to the deity. The same donor Ilayālvān made special provisions for the *Bhāshyavriti* or exposition of Rāmānuja-Bhāshya. Ilayālvān was another name of Rāmānuja. The donor was evidently a great devotee of Rāmānuja, whose name Ilayālvān he adopted as his own". Pp.65-67.

This important inscription does say that provisions were made for the exposition of *Rāmānuja Bhāshyavritti* and is an important landmark to show how *Rāmānuja Bhāshya* was a part of temple movement.However there are some discrepancies in this report,. Prof. Raman probably took this material from some source other than the 'Annual Report on Epigraphy' where the actual summary of the inscription is reported. This inscription was noticed in 1919 by the govt. epigraphist and reported under 'the stone inscriptions copied in 1919' (no.493.) The Annual Report on Epigraphy gives the following information about the inscription 493 of 1919, in Tamil). It records the gift of Ilaiyālvān Kālingarāyan of Nettur, of the taxes of villages of Sirukoil and Perukoil in Uttaramallur parru for the expenses connected with the offerings to the God Nāyanār Emperumānār, consecrated by him, repairs to the temple, for expounding the- *Rāmānuja*

*Bhāshya vritti* and the feeding of certain jiyars in the temple matha".

This is the summary originally published by the govt. epigraphist in 1919. It may be seen from the original that the name of the king mentioned in the inscription does not say Kulottunga III but as "Tribhuvana Chakravarti Konerinmai Kondān" which is a technical term, pointing out that the order was issued by the king himself. The consecrated image is mentioned as "Nāyinār Emperumānār". This is taken as a reference to Rāmānuja (Emperumān) Rāmānuja was neither before nor afterwards called Nāyanār which is used in records to denote "God". The epigraphist has rightly rendered it as "god". So a doubt arises whether "Nāyanār Emperumānār" refers to Rāmānuja. However as the record mentions the gift for expounding *Bhāshya Vritti*, of Rāmānuja Bhāshya, it may not be wrong to hold that Rāmānuja's image was consecrated. The main point is that Prof. Raman assigns it 1191. The record does not seem to belong to 1191 but nearly 125 years later. The donor mentioned as Nettur Udaiyār Kalingarāyan was a high ranking officer under the Pāṇḍya ruler Sundara Pāṇḍya who had the title Kodandarama who also figures in many Srirangam inscriptions. In all the inscriptions of this king, this Kālingarāyan of Nettur appears as a signatory. The date of this king is known from Srirangam inscriptions. He came to the throne in 1303. So his Kanchi inscription would fall in 1316 AD. As there are a number of inscriptions of this ruler at Srirangam, the date is well settled, and so the Kanchi inscription on RāmānujaBhāshya is dated to 1316 and not in the reign of Kulottunga III in1191. (225 - 227) of Sri Rangam inscriptions).

We may note from the Kanchi inscription that the donor has provided for the exposition of Bhāshya only. There is no reference to the recitation of, or exposition of *Prabandhams* in the records. It is claimed that Rāmānuja was responsible in propagating the *Prabandhams* but this evidence does not support that view. For the consecration of his image is such a significant event, and when arrangements for exposition of *Rāmānuja Bhāshya* is arranged and provisions made for other expenses, the absence of reference to *Prabandham* is glaring in this record. This has to be viewed against the silence of Rāmānuja on *Prabandam*.

In this regard another point also deserves attention. According to the Epigraphists, the gift of the image of Nāyanār Emperumānār was made by Elayālvān Kālingarāyan. Prof. Raman has followed the same report. The king is mentioned as Tribhuvanacakravarti Konerin maikondan, which means it is an order of the king and in all probability the donor was the king As the full text is not available we may not be able to verify who the donor was, at present. That the order has been issued by the king is unquestionable.

There is another inscription in the same place which also mentions this Ilavālvān Kalingarāyan of Nettur. This record was also an order of the same king, and says Tribhuvana Cakravarti, Konerinmaikondān dated in his 13+1 (14th year 1317 AD). In this record the donor is identified with Elaiyālvān Kalingarāyan of Nettur, who consecrated an image of Thiruvaliālvār, and gifted a village for its worship, and also for the offerings on *Chitirai* of every month, which was his birth star (457/1919).

An important Agaram (Brahmin settlement was established by Jatāvarman SundaraPāṇḍya at Srirangam as an adjunct of the main temple, in which 208 Brahmins were settled. The village was named Kodandarāma Caturvedimandalam after one of the titles of this king. Each Brahmin family was given shares in that village. A temple dedicated to Lakshminārāyana Perumāl was also established there. Most of the inhabitants were Bhaṭṭas – (scholars studying Vedas and sāstras), some were called Nambimars and some others as Upādhyāyas. Evidently the whole group was learning Vedas and Vedāntas. The inscription seems to suggest that they were different from the Sri Vaishnavas of the temple. Sundara Pāṇḍya made several gifts to this village Bhaṭṭas that are recorded in the Srirangan inscriptions, pointing to the importance of Vedantic study in the context of Vishnu temple. Nearly twenty records of this ruler deal with these Agara Bhaṭṭas. Among these Brahmanas, teaching vedas there were some expounding Purāṇas and all were supposed to do service in the Srirangam temple, by reciting Vedas, Vedāntas, and Purāṇas in temple services and festivals. This was a powerful Vedic and Sanskrit school, existing as part of the temple, rooted in Sanskritic traditions. That many of them were Vedāntins is proved by their names like Brahma cakravarti, Vedavyāsa, and so on. Most of them were recent migrants from Andhra desa or their families had come from there within living memory. A good number came from Kandadai and some from Irunganti, Aruni, Irayur, Kakkandi, Kattukkuri, Aippakkur, and so on. (223 of Sri Rangam Inscriptions)

Much earlier to Sundara Pāṇḍya III, the Kerala ruler Ravivarman's officers established another Agaram where lived Bhaṭṭas. Thirty two such families were settled near Sri

Rangam, in a new colony named after the Chera as Ravivarma-caturvedimangalam. Sundara Pāṇḍya who established Kodandarāma-caturvedimangalam served initially under Ravivarman as his subordinate and did a lot to improve the Agaram in the name of Ravivarman, before adding his own Agaram. Thus, for over a hundred years, the tradition of establishing the Agara Bhaṭṭas near Srirangam point to a strong northern tradition in and around Srirangam. All these Brahmanas were provided lands, house sites and comfortable life and they could concentrate on Vedantic studies and expositions. An inscription of 1306, dated in the reign of Ravivarman Chera, mentions Vedantis as the residents of the Agaram (216 SR ins) and that they contributed ten Panams for establishing the Ravivarma kulasekhara caturvedi mangalam. This would suggest that there was a strong contingent of Vedaṉtins among Vaishnava temples and it is possible that Rāmānuja's Darsana was directed towards them, than the Prabandic school which was already well established in Srirangam during the Cholas. That Rāmānuja did not write anything about the Prabandams or the Ālvārs in any of his works may be due to this factor.

That the Vaishnava scholar Vedānta Desikar lived during the first half of 14th cent. and was addressing the contemporary scholars is undoubtedly true. This was nearly two hundred years later than Rāmānuja. It was then that *Rāmānuja Bhāshya* was being expounded in Kanchipuram temple. The most popular commentary on Rāmānuja Bhāshya was called *Srutaprākasika* but the earlier commentary on the Sri Bhāshya called *SriBhāshya Vritti* had been written by one Rāma Misra said to be a direct disciple of Rāmānuja. As the inscription under description mentions

*Rāmānuja Bhāshya vritti,* it is possible that it was this *Sri Bhāshya vritti* that was being referred to.

## An inscription from Thiruppati

According to traditional accounts Sri Rāmānuja was the Srikāryam of the Srirangam temple after his arrival there as the head of the matha of Ālavandār and gradually took over the administration there.

In this connection it would be interesting to note an inscription from Thiruppati *Sri Venkatesap perumāl.* The record refers to the creation of an endowment to the Thiruppati temple around 965 CE, that is fifty years prior to the birth of Rāmānuja. According to the record a queen Sāmavvai, alias Kādavan Perundevi, the wife of a Pallava chief Kādupetti, consecrated a silver image of Vishnu (Manavālap perumāl) in the Thiru Ilankoyil after worshipping the main deity of Lord Venkatesvara on the Thiruvenkatam hill. She also gifted a good number jewels for decorating the image, and some lands purchased from the temple and the village after paying the price, and also depositing the tax guard to the village assembly and endowed the lands with the following stipulations.:-

The deity should be offered food daily

A perpetual lamp should be burnt before the deity

Special bathing festivals should be conducted on the two *Sankranti* and two *Ayana* days annually

A two day festival should be held before the Purattāsi festival annually.

The Great nine days' festival should be conducted in *Chittirai* beginning with the sprouting festival

There existed a matha as part of the Thiruppati temple at that time and it was presided over by an ascetic named Lakshmana Nambi. The lady donor stipulated in the deed that the services and festivals she instituted should be managed by the head of this matha of Thiuvenkatam. The village assembly should not levy customary local taxes. The royal taxes should not be paid to the royal treasury but paid to the temple for meeting expenses of the services. The record is sighned by the queen herself (no 8 of TDI vol I). and points to the fact that whenever an endowment was made to the temple and the same was entrusted to a matha or other functionaries, the deed had to specify who was responsible for the management of the endowment, as it was an important function of the management. We may therefore be absolutely sure that if any administrative function was under the control of Rāmānuja or his nominee at the Srirangam temple, the same would have been recorded in the inscription.

A study of Srirangam inscriptions shows no participation of the matha of Nāthamungical, his successor Yāmuna alias Ālavandār or Rāmānuja in the tenth or eleventh century in any of the functions of the temple. Probably this matha which Rāmānuja took over at the demise of Ālavandār was a private matha that had no administrative control over the Srirangam temple.

### *Tiruvāymoli* hymns in Srirangam temple

Sri Rāmānuja is credited with patronizing the recitation of *Tiruvāymoli* hymns of Nammālvār in the temple of Srirangam. An inscription from SriRanganātha temple at Srirangam dated in the reign of Kulottunga chola in 1085 CE throws valuable light on the tradition of reciting Thiruvāymoli hymns. A Commander in chief under Kulottunga named Āyarkolundu Cakrapāni also called Vira chola Munaiyadiyaiyan, of *Kottu*r gited fifty *kalanju* of gold to the temple to arrange for the recitation of *Tiruvāymoli* hymn during the waking up ritual of Ranganātha (*Palli elucchi*). The money was entrusted in the hands of *prabandham* singers in the temple whose names are given below. (57 of SI XXIV)

Thiru - arangattu nambi
Mannan Thiru - arangattu nambi, a son of the above
Thiru Kannapurattu araiyan alias Mannan Vennaik-kūttan
Mannan Thiru - Vinnagar nambi
Thiru-nāttu nambi

They were called *nibandakkārar* (duty bound singers) of the temple obliged to perform the duty of singing in lieu of emoluments. They received the Commander's donation and bound themselves to the service of reciting *Tiruvāymoli* hymns in the temple during *palli eluchi*. The service was called *Tiruvāymoli vinnappam ceytal*. This was in addition to their singing of *thiruppadiyam* regularly for which they were paid separately. According to the record, the Sri Vaishnavas of the 18 territorial divisions were to protect this charity and, to supervise the service being rendered daily. If the singers faltered for any reason the Sri Vaishnavas were empowered to fine them.

This inscription shows that the service of reciting sacred hymns *(prabandhams)* in the srirangam temple was already well established long before the date.1085. The singers assumed names from well known Vaishnava centres like Thiru-arangam, Thiru kannapuram, Thiru vinnagar and Thiru nādu. They also had titles like Arayan, Mannan, and Nambi. They had the right of singing *prabandams* and *Tiruvāymoli* on a hereditary basis, and now accepted the additional service of singing *Tiruvāymoli* of Nammālvār as *Palli eluchi*. In 1085 there were five singers of the *Prabandham* in the Srirangam temple. This also shows that the tradtion of singing *prabandam* was well established when Rāmānuja arrived at Srirangam

It must also be remembered that as early as the time of Pallava ruler Nandivarman (8-9th cent) the singing Tamil hymns had become a part of temple service in the Śiva temples. The tradition of appointing, Tamil singers also along with priests and other temple servants when new temples were erected was also well in place long before Rāmānuja's birth. So the practice of instituting. Tamil music service in temples was prevalent and was not an exclusive Vaishnava tradition, initiated by Rāmānuja.

There is also no mention in the record of Rāmānuja 's new introduction of the service. In this record the initiation was done by one of Kulottunga's commanders named Ayarkolundu. As there are no contemporary records of Rāmānuja in any of the three famous temple connected with his life like Srirangam, Kanchipuram and Thiruppati we are not able to substantiate the statement that Rāmānuja introduced the system in Vaishnava temples. To reinforce this idea, Rāmānuja, as we know, did not mention the prabandham in any of his own written works like *Sri Bhāshya*, or *Gita Bhāshya* or the *Vedārtha sangraha*.

## 9. DRĀVIDA – UPANISHAD

The great Vedic Rishis immortalized natural powers by creating fascinating poetic imagery, which in due course of centuries gave rise to new manifestation of the same powers by their sheer poetic appeal. The appeal was so vivid and realistic that it became impossible to accept the later imagery as an extension of the early Vedic concepts, though the Vedic roots were noted in a vague manner. The dual powers of Agni in its destructive and also benign nature, was sung by the Vedic sages as inseparable body, praised as "Agnā - Vishnu" in the Vedas. This dual body, called "**Arccā**" in the Yajur-veda, stands for the nature of Agni, which has the terrific power to burn down anything and at the same time its benign nature that provided sufficient warmth for life and vegetation to be born and supported. The Vedic rishis who sang these dual powers as Agnā-Vishnu, clarified that Agni in its terrific (Ghora) form is Rudra and the protective power is Vishnu. The dual form of Agni is therefore called "Rudra – Vishnu" in a unified form. This Agni -Vishnu of the Vedas came to be deified as "Hari – Hara" or "Sankara Nārāyana" in the succeeding periods.

The same Agnā - Vishnu was also called "Śiva – Sivā" in the Vedas, the first word Śiva denoting Rudra and the second word Sivā with a long 'ā', denoting Vishnu as the feminine form that is the root of the united form of Śiva and

Devi that later gave rise to the more familiar form of Ardhanāri.

The same dual but combined form of Agnā - Vishnu, gave rise to another concept namely the more powerful ghora form was equated to manly power and assigned the right side, while the benign power of Vishnu was assigned the left side of the body. So Śiva was always given the right half of the body in Harihara or Ardhanāri form whereas Vishnu or Devi was shown on the left. Thus both Vishnu and Devi occupied the left half, so much so they were considered, identical in some instances and brother and sister in other instances. Vishnu is called Māya whereas the Devi is called Māyā. These concepts rooted in the Vedas, deserve to be noted, in connection with what follows from the writings of the Vaishnava saints, Ālvārs.

The Ālvārs frequently refer to the combined form of Vishnu as Harihara which is clearly the Vedic tradition mentioned earlier. Though the Ālvārs sing the primordial nature of Vishnu in most of their hymns they do hold that Vishnu and Śiva are identical and their form is an inseparable unity. The following poems of Poykaiy ālvār describes the unity of Vishnu and Śiva in clear terms.

Vishnu and Śiva are indeed our refuge.
On one side he rides on the bull
while on the other he flies on a bird
One burnt the forts of the Tripurāsuras;
The other tore off the chest (of Hiranya),
One wears white sacred ash;
the other has the colour of black gems,

One has Uma as part of his body;
the other has Lakshmi
One has matted hair; the other wears a tall crown.
One has Gangā on his head; and the other has sacred
foot ('that measure the world')
Their form is one inseparable; He is our protection.

**பொய்கை**

*ஏற்றான் புள்ஊர்ந்தான் எயில் எரித்தான் மார் இடந்தான்*
*நீற்றான் நிழல்மணி வண்ணத்தான் கூற்றொருபால்*
*மங்கையான் பூமகளாள் விரிசடையான் நீள்முடியான்*
*கங்கையான் நீள்கழலான் காப்பு* 3254

*Errān Pull ūrntān; Ezil erintān manvitantān*
*Nirrān Nilal mani vannathān; Kurrorupal*
*Mangaiyān Pumakalān, var cataiyān nil mudiyan*
*Gangaiyān Nilkalān kāppu*

The second verse that is relevant reads as follows:-

Śiva, the virtuous *(Punyan)* wears matted locks,
and is of golden colour, Vishnu who measured the world by
stepping up, Move about in two different bodies
Each remains ever in the body of the other.

பொன் திகழ் மேனிப் புரிசடை எம் புண்ணியனும்
நின்று உலகம் தாய நெடுமாலும் என்றும்
இருவர் அங்கத்தால் திரிவரேனும் ஒருவன்
ஒருவர் அங்கத்து என்றும் உளன் 3281

*Pon tikal meni purisadai pungavanum,*
*Ninru ulakalan taya Nedumālum - enrum*
*iruvar angattāl Tirivarenum - oruvan*
*oruvan angattu enrum ulan*

This clearly points out that Śiva and Vishnu are inseperably present in each other though they move about in two different bodies. The third verse on the Sankara Narayana form is as follows.

One is named Hara while the other is Nārāyana;
One has the bull and the other the bird as vehicle
The texts they expounded are Āgama and Vedas,
Their abodes are mountain and waters.
Their acts are destruction and protection,
They carry in their hands, sula and cakra,
Their forms are fire and clouds
But their body is one.

அரன் நாரணன் நாமம் ஆன்விடை புள்ளூர்தி
உரைநூல் மறை உறையும் கோயில் வரை நீர்
கருமம் அழிப்பு அளிப்பு கையது வேல் நேமி
உருவம் எரி கார் மேனி ஒன்று

*Aran Nāranan nāmam; ānvidai pul ūrti*
*Urai nul marai; uraiyum koyil varai - nir*
*Karmam alippu kāpppu; kaiy atu vel nemi;*
*Uruvam eri kar; meni onru*

(It seems by saying that the texts expounded by Vishnu is *(marai)* Vedas, the Ālvār suggests the Vaikhānasa system of Vaishnavism. The Pancarātrins emphasize the teaching of the Āgamas of the Ekāyana school of the Sāttvatass).

These three verses of one of the earliest Ālvārs, Poykaiy Ālvār, clearly point out the unitary nature of Śiva and Vishnu and that there could be no rivalry between Saiva and Vaishnava sects.

Another early Vaishnava saint, Peyālvār also echoes the same view when he says the Lord of Thirumalai, has the combined from of Śiva and Vishnu in one.

> My Lord standing on the Thirumalai (Venkatam)
> With his hanging matted hair and the tall crown
> The sula and cakra in his hands and
> The snake and golden chain around his waist
> Manifest in combined form.

**பேயாழ்வார்**

> தாழ்சடையும் நீள்முடியும் ஒண்மழுவும் சக்கரமும்
> சூழ்அரவும் பொன்நாணும் தோன்றுமால் சூழும்
> திரண்டருவி பாயும் திருமலைமேல் எந்தைக்கு
> இரண்டுருவும் ஒன்றாய் இசைந்து

> *'Tāl Cadaiyum Nil mudiyum onaluvum cakkranum,*
> *Sul aravum pon nanum Tonrumāl - culum*
> *Tirandu aruvi pāyum Tirumalai mel entaikku*
> *Irandu uruvum onray icaintu*

The verse suggest though the dual nature of headdress, weapons and waistbands are distinct, his form is inseparably one appearing as Harihara. It postulates the unity of Śiva and Vishnu in unambiguous language.

It is evident that these early Ālvārs recognize the inseparable nature of Śiva and Vishnu in the true Vedic tradition. When later Vaishnava writers refer to the prabandam of Ālvārs as *Tamil marai*, they clearly meant that Prabandas rendered the essence of Vedas in Tamil and it is in that sense, the poems of Ālvārs are called "Tamil Vedas"

We may also note the harmony between Saiva and Vaishnava Schools from another angle.

A graphic description of the dance of Śiva is provided by the Vaishinavite saint - Thirumangai Ālvār in his poem "*Periya–Thirumadal*". The Ālvār sings this dance with great veneration and feeling. A study of this part would make us wonder whether it comes from a devout Saiva or Vaishnava devotee?

"Uma, the golden daughter of Himavan (malaiy araiyan), with coral lips and silver moon like smile, with swanlike gaits and slender waist like a creeper, performed a severe penance subduing her senses, Śiva performed the Cosmic dance in the sky by swaying his thousand arms, displaying fire in his arm, his anklets sounding a resonant rhythm, his hair entwined as locks and wielding a trident in his hand appropriate to her penance - Uma embraces him passionately (lines 65 - 72).

Nammālvār, speaks of the essential nature of Bahmā, Vishnu and Śiva as one inseparable unity. This conforms to the Vedic tradition and the puranic accounts that follow closely the Vedic ideas. It is evident early Vaishnavism was closer to the roots of their origin and exhibit no tension. It seems that we encounter Vedic Vaikhanasa system in the hymns of the Ālvārs.

வலத்தனன் திரிபுரம் எரித்தவன், இடம்பெற உந்தித்
தலத்து எழு திசைமுகன் படைத்த நல் உலகமும் தானும்
புலப்பட, பின்னும் தன் உலகத்தில் அகத்தனன் தானே;
சொலப் புகில், இவை பின்னும் வயிற்று உள;
இவை அவன் துயக்கே. 2112

In this connection we may draw attention to a text named *Dramido-Panishad Tātparya Ratnāvalii* - in Sanskrit, composed by Vedanta Desika. This text is a commentary on Nammālvār's hymn - *Thiruvāymoli*. Desika calls the hymns of Nammālvār as *Dramidopanishad* and asserts that the hymns are the essence of the Vedas. Desika summarizes the hymns in the following words:-

“This *prabhandha* tells first the subject dealt in the Vedanta in 21 verses expounding the 21 ***Sākhās*** of the Rgveda. It also treats the 1000 verses of the Ālvār as Sāmaveda contained in the *Sahasra* ***Sākhās*** with their symphony. They then tell us the Yajurveda, by their *Satakas* detailing their meaning and finally give the essence of the nine *sākhās* of the Atharva veda.

Ādau Sārirakāthatam iva
    Vimsati pankth sargam
Sankshepo asau vibhāgam Prathayatica Ricam
    Cāru pātopapannam
Samyak gitānubhaddham Sakalam anugatam Sāma
    Sākhā sahasram
Samlakshyam sabhidheyah Yajur apị satakaih
    Bhāti atharva rasaisca

Desika points out Nammālvār's songs are the exposition of the four Vedas and the Upanishads and so appropriately calls it *Dramida upanishad*. He also suggests that the *prabhandams* of the Ālvārs reflect the *pātha* of Rgveda, the meaning of Yajur veda, the music of the Sama Veda and the rasa (essence) of the Atharva veda. He also suggests that the reader of *Thiruvāymoli* derives the benefits of all the four Vedas together.

There is a traditional prayer in Sanskrit recited by the Vaishnavites when they recite Nammālvār's hymns. It calls the hymns as the very ocean of *Dramida-Veda sāgara*. It is also mentioned as the collection of *Sāhasra* - ***Sākhās*** *Upanishad*, the Upanishad of the Sāma-veda. It is also capable of pleasing all sections of the people and capable of bestowing all the *purushārthas*. Thus the Vaishnava tradition clearly points to the Vedic roots of the hymns of Nammālvār.

With this background when one starts the study of Nammālvār's poems, the very first hymnof the Ālvār strikingly brings forth the Upanishadic concept of the Supreme. It says the Supreme is none but "Ānanda" identical with Brahman of the Upanishad *uyarvara uyarnalam udaiyavan"* which means unparalled bliss. In the second line the Ālvār says that the Supreme is blemish-less knowledge *mayarvara mati nalam'* which virtually means Brahman is "Vijnāna" - ***Vijnānan Brahma***. He is the lord of the celestials. *Amararkal adhipati*. Then the Ālvār also says the Supreme is of the nature of effulgence *cutar ati*" - (Savitā).

In the eighth verse of the first decad the Ālvār clearly brings out the Trinity aspect of the Supreme. In fact the first ten verses of the *Thiruvāymoli*, are nothing but clear exposition of the Upanishadic meaning, as rightly held by the Vaishnavite tradition Therefore this Vedic approach to

Ālvār's poems provides a freshness to the study of Vaishnavism.

There are several commentaries on Thiruvāymoli of Nammālvār, Thirukkurukaip piran Pillan whose commentary is known as *Āriyairappadi* , draws our attention to Vedic passages in Anandavalli describing the Supreme nature of Brahman as the root of the first verse of *Thiruvāymoli – Anandavalliyil collii irukkirapadiyāle.* He also mentions that the concept is well known in such Vedic passages as *Ānanda srutis, Ānanda srutikalile prasiddham.* Also please see his statement that these are very well known in Upanishads *Upanishad prasiddhiyāy collukiratu.*

The commentator of *Pannirāyirap-padi* even declares that the usage of *yavan – avan* in the first poem of *Thiruvāymoli* by the Ālvār is after the Upanishadic usage *Yah- Sah (yascāyam purushe yscāsāvāditye sa ekah).* Though the elaborate commentaries are in Tamil it is not possible to study or understand them without a recourse to Vedic, Upanishadic, epic amd puranic texts, as the commentators cite from them as the imports of the hymns. As shown earlier that the Vedic tradition unequivocally emphasize the ultimate unity of trinity.

"The Upanishads do not speak to us limited dogmas. The life of spirit is wider than any particular religious formulations. Religion deals with man's seeking for the truth and joy and particular formations are but approximation to the unutterable. Full truth can be known only by a mind that transcendent rationality. As the Upanishad lay stress on spiritual experience and psychological discipline they do not insist on any one set of dogmas or codes.

"The one Supreme who dwells is conceived externally. The vulgar look for his Gods in water, men of wider knowledge in celestial abodes, the ignorant in (images of) wood and stone but the wise see the Supreme in their own self.

*apsu devāh manushyānām divi devāh manishinām*
*bālānam kāshta loshteshu buddheshu ātmani devatāh*

Whatever be the form we start with we grow to lordship of the universal spirit, immanent in all. The worship of the determinate form is recommended as preparation for the apprehension of non determined reality."

The above citations from S.Radhakrishnan's *Introduction to the Principal Upanishads* (Harper Collins Publishers Noida 1994) give a brilliant summary of the teachings of the Upanishad pp (139-148).

Nammālvār in his first Thiruvāymoli mentions the Supreme Universal Spirit but does not name any God in the true spirit of the Upanishad. He speaks of the unbounded joy-ānanda *(Ānando Brahma).* The rational knowledge bereft of confusion *(mayarvara matinalam),* the lordship over immortality, and finally the effulgent brightness of light. The approach of Nammālvār seems to be of the highest Upanishadic philosophy. He certainly denotes Brahman of the Upanishad which is beyond name and form and so does not name any God. His Godhood encompasses all the Trinity but for purposes of religious discipline chooses Vishnu as the Primordial God. Those who are immersed in the delightful poems of the Ālvār found in him a Supreme Yogi. Rāmānuja was obviously aware of the Vedic nature of *Prabandhams,* and the universal nature of their appeal, there was no need for him to integrate the Vedic and prabantha traditions, for they were not two different concepts and paths, but one and the same only expressed in two different languages.

The following two verses of Nammālvār brings out the emotional and at the same time the Supreme nature of Godhood.

யாவையும் எவரும் தானாய், அவரவர் சமயம் தோறும்
தோய்வு இலன்; புலன் ஐந்துக்கும் சொலப்படன்; உணர்வின் மூர்த்தி.
ஆவி சேர் உயிரின் உள்ளால் ஆதும் ஓர் பற்று இலாத
பாவனை அதனைக் கூடில், அவனையும் கூடலாமே 2346

ஒளி மணி வண்ணன் என்கோ? ஒருவன் என்று ஏத்த நின்ற
நளிர் மதிச் சடையன் என்கோ?-நான்முகக் கடவுள் என்கோ?
அளி மகிழ்ந்து உலகம் எல்லாம் படைத்து, அவை ஏத்த, நின்ற
களி மலர்த் துளவன், எம்மான், கண்ணனை, மாயனையே 2344

# 10. DIVYA-PRABANDHAM AND THIRUVĀYMOLI

## Tradition and Alternate route

The study of Divya-prabandham hymns of Vaishnavite Ālvārs is hitherto based mainly on the commentaries of Vaishnavite seers that have come down to us through the centuries. These commentaries were written by true devotees of the faith centered on Vishnu temples to communicate the joy of divine the experience, to their fellow followers. These commentaries help us in fathoming the emotional fervor (*bhakti*) reflected in the hymns. It is almost impossible to study the hymns without recourse to the commentaries of these seers.

However one may, have to keep them aside as these are post Rāmāyana in date but explore an alternate route purely based on history, chronology, and monuments that either preceded or were contemporary with the Ālvārs.

## Paripādal

The Paripādal poems of the Sangam age, extol the supremacy of Vishnu based on Vedic ideology that is not exclusive in approach but is contextual and is in the broad spectrum of adoring Muruga, Śiva, and Durgā that are acceptable to the devotees. One may say that all Gods were revered alike though one god may be extolled in one context, the others appearing in secondary position. One ~~finds~~ finds equal number of hymns addressed to Muruga in the same Paripadal collection. The Sangam poems and also the post Sangam epics Silappadikaram and Manimekhalai praise also Śiva and Durga. They speak of Vishnu, and Muruga in identical terms. For example the Paripādal extols Vishnu in the following lines. "Thou, Lord, art the inner meaning of the Vedas of Brahmins. Thou manifest in the sacrificial fire (*agni* of the *yajnas*) duly kindled according to the Vedic kalpas and receive the sacrificial offerings. *Yajna rupa* is thy form and that is how the Vedic Brahmins invoke thee in fire.

How the other deities occupy a secondary position in this context may be seen from Paripadal (no 3, lines 1 to 78). This may also be compared with the hymn on Muruga, where he is praised as the inner meaning of the Vedas of the Brahmins, the other deities including Vishnu and Śiva appearing in secondary position (no 8). There are several Puranic legends about the manifestations of Vishnu, Śiva, and Muruga in *Paripādal* that closely follow the earlier Puranic accounts, closer to Vedic thoughts. One interesting phenomenon that needs attention is that *madhura bhakti* (love emotions) is more associated with Muruga, than Vishnu, who is looked upon with wonder and veneration (*adbhuta*).

## Vedic tradition of Purnic theology

The Vedic tradition was enlarged and made more popular by illustrative legends compiled into 18 *mahā-*

*puranas*. A study of all the *mahā-puranas* would show that the Vedic ideas are simplified into stories and clearly emphasize that both Vishnu and Śiva are identical and that one who differentiates them, as totally separate, knows neither Śiva nor Vishnu.

The division into Saivite or Vaishnavite purānas is purely artificial and does not reflect their true nature, explicitly stated by them. Early Vedic religion emerged as Purānic religion with the codifications of the latter. From the Mauryan age to the end of 10th cent CE one may say that puranic religion dominated the Indian scene as an extension of the Vedic tradition.

## Pallava age (3rd to 9th cent)

It may also be mentioned that there is no exclusiveness in the early Pallava age. The Pallava copper plate charters of the early period reveal an interesting aspect of religious devotion. One and the same ruler is addressed as a supreme devotee of Māhesvara, Vishnu, and Brahmanya (*Parama- māhesvara, Parama-bhāgavata and Parma-Brahmanya*), all in one. Most Indologists consider Saivism and Vaishnavism as mutually exclusive, but cannot conceive both are complementary to each other as part of one and the same ideology. It is impossible for some to even conceive that a Vaishnavite could also be a Supreme devotee of Śiva, but epigraphs of 5th to 9th century prove the Pallava rulers as Saivites, Vaishnavites and devotees of Subrahmanya.

There is a tradition among the rulers to extol the greatness of a particular deity in the invocatory verse of a royal order, recorded in copper plate charters, when a gift is made to that deity. If the grant is made to a Vishnu temple, the invocatory verse would be generally in praise of Vishnu and so is the case with a grant to Śiva temple. If the charter relates to the Buddhist or Jain establishment, the record would invoke Buddha or Jina respectively. Several examples could be cited from copper plate grants. If however the grant is addressed to a Brahmin settlement the invocation addresses both Śiva and Vishnu. It may not be correct to consider a king either an exclusive Vaishnava, or Saiva on the basis of invocatory verses found in their orders. It is the Vedic ideology that is reflected in the royal orders that is often mentioned as *sanātana dharma*, the ancient tradition.

We may briefly note some monuments of 6th to 10 the cent CE. One of the early temples recorded in inscription is that of Mahendra Pallava, c.600 CE, excavated at Mandagappattu, in Tamilnadu. The temple that still exists was called *Brahm-Isvara-Vishnu lakshātayatana* i.e. temple dedicated to Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva. On each side of the façade are representation of Garuda and Nandikesvara as Dvarapalas. A cave temple of the same age is the Lower Rock cut temple at Thiruchirappalli, that has two sanctums scooped, one on either side of the temple, meant for Śiva and Vishnu, while the rear wall has Ganesa, Brahmā, Subrahmanya, Surya and Durgā, Brahmā occupying the central position making it a temple dedicated to the Trinity. A cave temple at Mamallapuram assignable to the beginning of the 8th cent, houses Śiva, Vishnu, and Subrahmanya in the three cells and is rightly called the Trimurti temple. There are both Saivite and Vaishnavite temples at Mamallapuram, assignable to the same age. The famous Sea - Shore temple complex is dedicated to both Śiva and reclining form Vishnu. The Ādi-Varāha temple in the same place is dedicated to Varāha form of Vishnu but carries an inscription extolling the greatness of Rudra in characters of the same age and the temple itself named Paramesvara- mahāvarāha-Vishnu graha. The vast open-air sculptures of Arjuna's penance, the Krishna mandapa portraying the Govardhana-dhāri panel and the Mahishasurmardini cave clearly show, the overwhelming role of Purānas in their creation. Similarly, the Sculptural portrayal at the Kailasanatha temple of Kanchipuram is a clear example of the Puranic tradition in the temple arts of the beginning of 8th century.

In ancient village settlements, temples to Vishnu, Śiva, Saptmātā, Durgā and other deities were all consecrated in separate temples as part of the whole village lay out, as is evidenced by the Uttaramerur village, founded by the Pallava emperor, Nandivarman II in the mid 8th cent. Uttaramerur was a village laid as per the Vaikhānasa-āgama, the Marici samhita. It is well-known the Vaikhānasa school of Vaishnava system was mainly Vedic, admitted by the texts themselves and also the living traditions. Though there were temples dedicated individually to Śiva or Vishnu, there was harmony in approach, and that they were held part of the whole system and wherever praises are found to any single deity, the same is to be understood contextually and not in isolation.

## Pāṇḍyan tradition

Two illustrations may be cited from the Pāṇḍyan country. Two cave temples were excavated side-by-side, one dedicated to Śiva and the other to Vishnu in his reclining form at Thirumeyyam in Pudukkottai state. Though, these are now separated by later walls, they formed part of the same dedication originally is clear enough. Thirumangai Ālvār has sung the Vishnu temple in the 8th cent. Both the temples are assignable to the beginning of the seventh cent CE. The famous Subrahmanya temple at Thirupparamkunram near Madurai is an excavated temple with two sanctums excavated one on either side, one dedicated to Vishnu and the other to Śiva. While the facade of the rock on the side of the Vishnu sanctum, carries three images of Vishnu as Adinātha, Varāha and Narasimha, the other façade on the side of the sanctum of Śiva, carries a beautiful form of Dancing Śiva, accompanied by other deities. At the back wall of the sanctum are seen Subramanya, Durgā, and Ganesa. The image of Subrahmanya has assumed importance through the centuries and is the main deity now. However originally the cave temple was consecrated in the 8th cent, to both Śiva and Vishnu.

Many more such temples dedicated to both Śiva and Vishnu could be cited but suffice it to say that when the Ālvārs were composing their poems, it was the Puranic synthesis that permeated the Tamil landscape.

## Poems of Ālvārs

It is against this background the poems of Ālvārs are to be studied. The dates of Ālvārs are well settled as between 5th to 9th. cent. CE. The Divya-prabandham hymns should be viewed in the prevailing situation. Though the Ālvārs sang the supreme nature of Vishnu, there was no doubt in their minds, that Vishnu, Śiva and Brahmā were absolutely identical and that they sang truly puranic ideology of oneness of Trinities, and in this approach they were the true spokesmen of Vedic tradition.

## Thiruvāymoli of Nammālvār

We have already seen the poems of Nammālvār, the most respected among the Ālvārs, whose thousand verses called *Thiruvaymolzi* constitute the last collections of the *Divyaprabandham* group. The Ālvār himself says that the last hymn of ten verses, of his composition were the end of his thousand poems. Thus the last hymn serves as the very summum bonum of the Ālvār's theology. Even among ten verses of the last hymn it is necessary to see the last verse and three others, as his conclusions.

Nammālvār says that among all the desires, the greatest desire is the achievement of salvation, which once achieved, no further desire remains, in other words "one reaches a desire-less state". The Ālvār says that having extolled Hari (Vishnu), Aja (Brahmā) and Hara (Śiva) he has obtained salvation and there is no further desire in him. (*Ariyai, Ayanai, Aranai alarri, ava arru, vidu perra, Thirukkurukur Satakopan*) He has achieved both salvaion and the desire-less state at the same time. These last words of Nammālvār, that enabled him to attain salvation by singing Vishnu, Brahmā and Śiva, proves that his brand of Vaishnavism was not an ideology of excluding Saivism, but an all embracing Hindu faith of adoring the Trinity of Puranic theism. It needs to be emphasized that this is the concluding verses of the Ālvār.

அவா அறச் சூழ் அரியை அயனை அரனை
அவா அற்று வீடுபெற்ற குருகூர் சடகோபன் சொன்ன
அவல் இல் அந்தாதிகளால் இவை ஆயிரமும் முடிந்த
அவாவில் அந்தாதியிப் பத்தறிந்தார் பிறந்தோர்
உயர்ந்ததே *3183*

*Avā arac cūl* ***ariyai, ayanai, aranai*** *alarri*
*Avā arru viidu perra kurukūr catakopan conna*
*Avā il antātikal ivai pattum āyiram mutinta*
*Avāil antāti pattu arintor piranatar uyarnte.* *Verse-* 11

Birth of liberation is certain for those
Who realize this antadi verses ten,
That ends the thousand poems
Sung by Satakopan of Thirukurukurr,
Who has conquered his desires,
And attained salvation that ended his wishes by
Singing the greatness of **Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva**

## Nammālvār and Natarāja

A most significant verse of the Ālvār, that speaks of Vishnu as *Ākāsa, param-joti, Jnāna,* and *ānanda* residing in the heart of the devotee, recalls the figure of Natarāja

சூழ்ந்து அகன்று ஆழ்ந்து உயர்ந்த முடிவில் பெரும்பாழேயோ
சூழ்ந்ததனில் பெரிய பரநன் மலர் சேர் தீயோ
சூழ்ந்ததனில் பெரியசுடர் ஞான இன்பமேயோ
சூழ்ந்ததனில் பெரிய என் அவா அறச் சூழ்ந்தாயே *3182*

*Sūlntu akanru ālntu uyarnta mutivuil perum pāle oh*
*Sūlntu, atanul periya para nal malarc coti oh*
*Sūlntu athanil periya cutar jnāna inpame oh*
*Sūlntu atanil periya en avā ara culntāye*

**Encompassing and expanding,**
**Fathoming and soaring high,**
**Thou art the expansive endless void;**
**Thou encircling the void appear**
**As the auspicious, and rising, Supreme light;**
**Encompassing the great light**
**Thou art the great Knowledge and bliss and**
**Thou hath consumed me to put an end to my desires.**

***உம்பரந்தன் பாழேயோ அதனுள் மிசை நீயேயோ***
***அம்பர நற்சோதி அதனுள் பிரமன் அரன் நீ***
***உம்பரும் மாதவரும் படைத்த முனிவன் அவன்***
***எம்பரம் சாதிக்கலுற்று என்னை***
***போரவிட்டிட்டாயே...*** ***3176***

*umbar tan pāle oh atanul micai niye oh*
*ambaram anal coti atanul **piraman aran*** **ni**
*umbarum mātavarum pataitta munivan avan ni*
*emparam cātikkalurru ennai pora vittayee*

**Thou art the cool space of the celestials**
**Thou resideth in that vast aspace**
**Thou art the ambaram-**
**The vast expansive sky as illuminating light**
**Thou art Brahmā and Śiva residing inside that shining light**
**Thou art the sage who created the celestials and the great saints**
**Thou have conferred on me that supreme state**
**And also made me cross that state.**

**In another verse of the same hymn, the Ālvār addresses the Lord as "Mukkan Appa - Śiva my Father with the three eyes".**

முனியே நான்முகனே முக்கண்ணப்பா என் பொல்லாக்
கனிவாய் தாமரைக் கண்கரு மாணிக்கமே என் கள்வா
தனியேன் ஆருயிரே என் தலைமிசையாய் வந்திட்டு
இனி நான் போகலொட்டேன் ஒன்றும் மாயம் செய்யேல்
எனையே 3173

*muniye nānmukane mukkan- appā en polla*
*kanivay tāmaraik karu mānikkamee en kalvā*
*taniyen āruyire en talai micaiyay vantittu*
*ini nān pokal otten, onru māyam ceyyel ennaiyee*

Oh thou Sage, Brahmā, and Śiva
My lotus eyed, sweet lipped, black - gem
My thief! My intimate life
As thou hast manifested on my head
I wouldn't let you go away
Don't play any māyā on me!

The Ālvār calls the Lord as Śiva in at least three verses of his last hymn, and extolls him in identical terms as one would address the dancing form of Śiva. Vishnu is the support of the celestials - the vast space also called *ambaram-Ākāsa*. Ākāsa is addressed by the Saivite Nayananmar Appar as *kaduveli*, i.e. vast immeasurable empty space. The word *perum pāzh* employed by the Ālvār is the exact equivalent of the term, *kadu-veli* of the Nayanmars. The Ālvār calls Vishnu as the great, auspicious and supreme light that emanates in Ākāsa. *Periya, para, nal malar joti* - the great effulgent light.

Often *Ākāsa* in which Śiva Natarāja dances is called *parama-Ākāsa*, the metaphysical Supreme space. It is the same lord whom the Ālvār addresses as auspicious, supreme light in the great void, *perum pāl suulntu atanul-periya para nal malar joti"*It would be interesting to compare these concepts. Mahavishnu and Śiva Natarāja. Two concepts are emphasized in the form of Natarāja. First, Natarāja represents supreme knowledge, frequently called *Jnāna-mā-Natarāja*. This knowledge appears as resplendent light dispelling the darkness of ignorance, appearing as the dwarf *(apasmāra)*, shown beneath his foot. Second, the dance of Śiva culminates in Supreme happiness *Ananda* and hence Natarāja's dance is called *jnāna-ānanda-tāndava*, the dance of knowledge and bliss. This dance resides in chid, the consciousness of the devotee. The supreme desire in the mind of the devotee is to attain salvation, by visualizing the dance of Śiva in his consciousness.

The song "*sulntu akanru* etc.", of Nammālvār elaborates the same concepts as the vast space, (*para Ākāsa*), the supreme light, *param joti*, in the midst of space Ākāsa, who appears as *jnāna* and *ānanda*, knowledge and bliss (*jnāna inbam)* and the consciousness of the devotee where the god's dance takes place. This verse of Nammālvār could be applied either to Vishnu or Natarāja as the Ālvār does not mention any God by name. That the Ālvār had Śiva also in his mind is unquestionable as he identifies lord Śiva with Vishnu three times, in the same hymn. That is only to suggest that study of Vaishnavism can not be done in isolation but has to take the contempoaray development of Saivism of Nayanmars and temple movement.

As mentioned already Nammālvār addresses explicitly that "thou appear as joti in *ambara* and thou art Brahmā and Śiva in it". Also he prays "*Muniye, Nānmukane,, Mukkan Appa*" referring to the Trinity. The term Muni is employed to denote Vishnu's incarnation in Nara Nārāyana. Nānmukan is the four-headed Brahmā. Mukkan appā is Śiva, the three eyed. The Ālvār's address to the Lord as Trinity is couched in such an emotional appeal that for him the Supreme Lord is Vishnu, Brahmā and Śiva.

## Bhārgavi Vidyā

This is the deep-rooted puranic position where the question of Saiva Vaishnava differentiation does not exist. I have mentioned earlier that the purānas are the extension of the Vedic tradition. There is a Vedic passage called *Bhriguvalli*, some times also called *Ānandavalli* in which Bhrigu, approached his father Varuna and requested him to teach him the nature of Brahman, the Supreme. His father advised him to do penance and realize Brahman himself. Bhrigu first thought that *annam i.e.* food was Brahman, then he thought that it was vital breadth - *prāna* and then he thought it could be mind - *manas*. In this way he approached his father again and again. His father persuaded him to do further penance and realize Brahman. The last two stages of Bhrigu's realization are interesting. He realized it was supreme knowleege *vijnāna,* that is Brahman and lastly he realized it was bliss - *Ānanda* that is Brahman. All searches, ended up in knowledge and bliss, *jnāna* and *ānanda* as the ultimate Brahman. This Vedic hymn is well known as the "*Bhārgavi vidyā"* in the Vedas itself. The dawn of knowledge ending in bliss is considered as *Ānanda* in the Vedas. That is what Nammālvār says as *jnāna-inbam* in his last hymn. This takes place in the illuminating light appearing in *Ākāsa*. Citing this Vedic passage Srikanta, the Sivādvaita Commentator on *Brahma sutras*, says the term *Ākāsa* denotes *ānanda*. *Ākāsa iti Ānandah ucyate*. *Ākāsa* and *ananda* are synonyms. He also says the term is used to denote Chidamabaram; *Ākāsa iti chidambara prakritih ucyate*. This is the direct extension of the Vedic concept that is indicated explicitly by Nammālvār.

When Rāmānuja passed away and his body was carried in procession, this vedic hymn called Brguvalli was recited in the procession, that shows Rāmānuja's attachment to this hymn. This hymn is admirably summed up by Nāmmālvar in his last hymn of this *Thiruvāymoli*. Illustrating that the Vedic and the Tamil Vedic *(Dramilopanishads)* are one and the same, expressed in two languages. Rāmānuja examplified this continunity of the Veda that is its relevance here the "Inba" Jnāna – ānanda also called for ānanda the bliss of knowledge.

## Nammālvār's Firm faith

So Nammālvār concludes that his Thiruvāymoli extolled Hari, Hara and Brahmā, eliminated all his desires, and enabled him to attain salvation, and those who realized this end verse of his thousand poems, reach the highest state among mortals.

## Puranic base

That these are direct reflections of the Purānas can be demonstrated from several passages from Puranas especially the *Vishnu purāna* and the *Kurma purāna*. We cite these puranas as they are considered Vaishnava texts.

"In the ultimate state there is no difference between Mahādeva and me. The Supreme lord out of his own volition created the Divines, Demons and the human beings of the three worlds, made himself the inner propelling force (*antaryāmi*) and the overlord (*Isvara*) manifested as Brahmā, Vishnu, and Śiva by their respective actions."

*Aham caiva mahādevah na bhinnah paramārthathah*
*Vibhāvya svecchayā ātmānam sah antaryāmi isvarah sthtithah*
*Trialokyam akhilam srishtum brahmatvam samupāgatah*
*Tasmāt Brahmā Mahādevah Vishnuh Visvesvarah parah*
*Ekasyaiva smritāh tisrah tattat kārya-vasād prabhoh*

This is a clear declaration that the Supreme being is called Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva by functional differences and are not different entities. At one stage Śiva says in the *Kūrma purāna* that:-

"I am Time - Kāla who burns down all bondages and am Hara, the creator of time Kāla. I activate the entire mobile and immobile beings. Vishnu is Purusha, the propelling force of all beings, while I am Purushottama. Vishnu is the Māyā prakriti called by men Parāsakti, the germinal abode (*jagat yoni*) of the universe. Nārāyana, the creator of the whole world is the Supreme Unmanifest Principle according to the Vedas. I am called the Supreme when I assume the role of Destroyer. My Supreme power, Parā-Sakti is called *Vidyā-deha* body of knowledge. *Brahmā*, Vishnu and Isvara are the entities that have neither beginning nor end, but reside in Brahman the unmanifest and imperishable. This is the Supreme state of bliss of the Soul (*Atmānanda* and *Param tattvam*) that is the essence of

Conciousness (*Chin-mātra*) also called *Ākāsa*, the blemishless Brahman" (*Kūrma purāna - uttarārdham* c.35-62-73)

This passage of the *Kūrma purāna* deserves special attention. It speaks of the identity of Brahmā, Vishnu, and Śiva, the manifests of Para-Brahman (of the Vedantins). The purāna also connects Para-Brahman with the inner consciousness, which is also called Ākāsa in the pūrāna. This is designated the supreme state -Parama-pada. Nammālvār's poem cited, mentioning the same concepts seems to be a direct rendering of the purāna.

We may cite some verses of Nammālvār at the very beginning of his *Thirūvaymoli*:-

"It is the supreme
That took forms as one and many
That is beyond all comprehensions
That revealed itself as
Beautiful Nārāyana, Brahmā and Śiva,
Effaced our bondages hither and beyond
And made our life auspicious and Blissful.

*Onru ena pala ena arivu arum vativunul ninra*
*Nanru elil nāranan nānmukan aran ennum ivarai*
*Onru num manattil vaittu, ulli, num iru pasa aruttu*
*Nanru ena, nalam ceyvathu avanitai namutai nale*

ஒன்று எனப் பல என அறிவு-அரும் வடிவினுள் நின்ற
நன்று எழில் நாரணன் நான்முகன் அரன் என்னும் இவரை
ஒன்ற நும் மனத்து வைத்து, உள்ளி, நும் இரு பசை அறுத்து,
நன்று என நலம் செய்வது அவனிடை நம்முடை நாளே

The vedic tradition is further explicitly mentioned in Nammālvār's poem when he puts it in the mouth of Krishna the following statement "I am the cause of rituals and the fruits of ritual action".

*Karumamum karuma-palanum ākiya kāranan*

At another place he echoes the same words of *kūrma-purāna* when he says "which ever is dear to an individual, that form is his chosen God, to whom he should perform worship. For Satakopa it was made possible by taking refuge in lord Vishnu."

Yavaiyum evarum tānāy avaravar camyam torum
Toyvu ilan pulan aintukku colppatan unarvin murti
Avi cer uyirin ullal atum or parrilata
Bavanai atanaik kutil avanaiyum kutalāme.

சூரர்அறி வருநிலை விண் முதல் முழுவதும்
வரன்முத லாயவை முழுதுண்ட பராபரன்
புரமொரு மூன்றெ ரித்தமரர்க்கு அறிவீய்ந்து
அரனயன் எனஉல கழித்தமைத் துளனே 2089

*Surar Arivaru nilai vin muluvatum*
*Varan mutalay avai mulutunta parāparan*
*Puram onru erittu amararkku ariviyntu*
*Aran ayan ena ulaku alittu amaittu ulane*

It is appopriate to mention here that Madhurakavi Ālvār a desciple and a contemporary of the Ālvār sums up the theology of Nammālvār in the following words: - Sri Satakopa sang the inner meaning of the Vedas of the Vedic

Brahmins and made me retain them in my mind, as I have taken refuge in him.

**மதுரகவி**

*மிக்க வேதியர் வேதத்தின் உட்பொருள்*
*நிற்கப் பாடி என் நெஞ்சம் நிறுத்தினான்*
*தக்கசீர் சடகோபன் என்நம்பிக்கஆட்*
*தக்க காதல் அடிமை பயனன்றோ*

*Mikka vediyar vedattin utporul pāti*
*Nirkap padi en nenjinul niruttinān*
*Takka cir catakopan ena nampikku*
*Takka kātal atimai payan anre*

That virtually is a commentary on Nammālvār's theological position.

Nammālvār is clear in his mind and sings in his verses, that his theology is Vedic ideology and is based on the identity of Trinity and that he is adoring - Brahmā, Vishnu, and Śiva as the Supreme that bestows salvation to the devotee. He declares the same ideology both at the beginning and end of his *Thiruvāymoli* hymns. It has also been shown that *Kūrma-purāna* specifically mentions that the Vedas declare Trinity as the Supreme and not mutually exclusive. From the elucidation of Trinity in the early purānas it would be appropriate to hold that the Ālvārs were propagating the Puranic theology of Trinity with the contextual emphasis on Vishnu.

# 11. RĀMĀNUJA'S PASSING AWAY

There is a fascinating account of Rāmānuja's passing away. On the last day the priests like Rangarāja bhattar , Periya perumāl bhattar, and others collected the silken cloth worn by Lord Ranganātha, the Garlands which Lord Ranganātha wore and discarded and all other prasāda carried them on plates in procession to Rāmānuja to the accompaniment of Music and recitations. The great soul received them with veneration and placed them on his head and worshipped them with devotion. Then he taught the priests the *Jnānapāda* from the *Pāncarātra samhitā*. Then he ordered the *kutastha* to establish *Sri Sukti* and the *Bhāshya* he had written. He then blessed Nadātur ālvān to propagate his *Sri Bhāshya* and maintain it and presented his royal seat *Simhāsana Bhāshya*. Earlier he conferred on him the title *Vedānta Ācārya* now he conferred on him another title "*Prapatti bala tarita Vishnumaya madvamsya Rājakula*" It suggests that Rāmānuja considered his circle as a royal circle-*rājakula*. Rāmānuja also conferred the seat of *Sri sukta* (*Sri sukti simhāsana*) on Periya bhatta. He then entrusted the worship of his own *Samādhi* image to Kndādai Annan and adviced the Mudalis (leaders of religious group) like Thirukkurukai pirān pillān to follow the advice of Bhatta.. Rāmānuja called all the *kottus* of the temple and requested them to pardon him for any wrong done to them. (It shows

Rāmānuja Saulabhya (simplicity). It is moving to see such a great soul to seek pardon from his servants. They rightly said "Swami Could there be anything wrong at all in your action as you are the embodiment of godhood". Rāmānuja assured them that so long as the Lord Vishnu Sri Ranganātha was there, they will enjoy all auspicious things". He also directed them to seek the advice of Bhattar in all matters of temple administration. He also advised them to keep harmony among all temple groups and Sri Vaishnavas. He presented al the *kottus* in the hands of Bhattar.and blessed Bhattar and advised him to popularize the worship and services of the temple of Ranganātha and propagate His (Rāmānuja's) *darsana*. It was at this he pronounced the six great pronouncements on conduct.

1. Keep reading my *Sri Bhāshya* and teach them to others.
2. If you are not suitable for this, recite the *Arulippādu* (sacred hymns) and teach others to sing them
3. If they are unable to do so they may cultivate the lands belonging to the temple and arrange for regular worship, and offerings and beautifications of the lord Ranganātha.
4. If one is unable to do likewise he may go to Thiru Nārāyana-puram , build a hut and live there
5. If unable to do this keep thinking about *dvayam* and its meaning and lastly
6. If unable to observe any of these take refuge in a Bhāgavata who is my devotee.

So saying Rāmānuja with his head on the lap of Embār and his feet on the lap of Vaduga nambi left his mortal coil and reached his cherished feet of his Lord. It is a moving and emotional parting away of a great soul and his parting advice to his followers. There is no need to dissect this parting as it is a great moment.

However the mundane historian can derive some great messages On reading the events that happened on the the day of passing away of Rāmānuja one gets the impression that his foremost mission in his life was to interpret and propagate the Vedantic doctrine through his *Sri Bhāshya*. So he wanted his disciples to pay special attention to the reading of Upanishads, understand their import and the *Brahmā-sūtras* through his interpretations. There could be no doubt Rāmānuja was essentially and foremost, a Vedantic scholar. Even at his death bed he instructed at the first instance to pay attention to *Vedānta sūtras* and his *Bhāshya*.

Rāmānuja's second teaching was to recite the *stotras* – *arulicceyals* the sacred hymns. *Arulicceyals* stand for two classes of poems; one they represent the Tamil *prabandam* hymns of the Ālvārs and the second meaning would be the Stotras in Sanskrit and Tamil that would include his own *Gadya-traya* and other well known *stotras*. That *arulicceyals* stand for Sanskrit stotras as well is attested by many Sanskrit stotras cited in the *Guruparampara* itself along with citations from *prabandam*. In addition to Sanskrit *stotras* the *Guruparampara* also cites *prabandam* lines as supplements in the same context and thus shows there was emphasis on both the language hymns. This teaching of Rāmānuja does show that both the Sanskrit and Tamil hymns were intimately integrated into one in the time of Rāmānuja, though he neither cited from *prabandam* nor referred to them by name. However there seems to have been two traditions suggested between the two. While referring to the *Sribāshya* and *Sri Sūktam* Rāmānuja employs the word "*Vācittum*" and "*Vācippittum*" i.e to read and understand and teach others also read and understand. However when it came to *Aruliceyal* he uses the word "*odiyum*" and "*Oduvittum*" i.e to recite and teach to recite. So it is evident that when it came to *Vāci* i.e read it was meant to read and understand the meaning while in the case of reciting or (singing) there was no need for understanding the meaning but simply recite or sing to tunes. It suggests that the tradition of writing elaborate commentaries on the sacred *prabandam*s of Ālvārs has not gained popularity at the time of Rāmānuja and this might perhaps be the reason why Rāmānuja has not cited from *prabandam*s. But as Thirūvāymoli hymns were given special position in the waking rites daily and also used by the Araiyars to interpret the meaning, the tradition of writing commentary like the *Ārāyirappadi* and other *padis* came into vogue later.

There is another important information furnished by the *Guruparampara* on Ramaunja's death. The text says Rāmānuja's body was purified with *Brahmā medha samskāra* a Vedic rite for the dead. His body was then placed on a palanquin mentioned as Divine Vimāna and carried preceded by instrumental music.The temple servants carried parasols and *tālavrindam*. 700 jiyars that included Atkonda villi jiyar, and Yati vara jiyars followed reciting *Brahmavalli, Brighu valli, Nārāyana anuvākam* and other Upanishads. Kandādai ālvān, Nadādur ālvān and others carried respective temple emblems. Nine thousand Srivaishnavas who were wearing *upavita* sacred thread recited as a *ghosti* the first part of the three thousand *prabandams*. Another 12000 Srivaishnavas who were not wearing *upavita* (Sāttāda) recited the second part of the *prabandams* as if in response (the first three thousand verses). Seven hundred Tambirans who were in groups headed by Thiru Aranga-perumāl araiyar, and his group like Tiruvāymoli araiyar, Appan Thiruvalundur araiyar, Thirunaraiyur araiyar and Alagiyamanavāla araiyar sang the *Thiruvāymoli* hymns.set to tunes and playing cymbals with their hands. Another group headed by Poyyil vallālar sang the "hundred verses on Udaiyavar" (*Rāmānuja nurrantāti*). Embār, Pillān and others sang *stotras* and *gadyas*. Siriyālvān of Gomatham followed singing *Prapatti*.

The streets were decorated; men scattered corn flakes – *pori* and flowers and spread *pāvādai* carpets before the procession for carriers of the body to walk. Some carried sugarcanes and pots. When the procession reached the temple premises, married women carried *mangala dipas* (auspicious lamps) on both the sides of the body, There were others who waved fly whisks. The single pipe was blown in the procession, announcing "the Lord of the *darsanam has* attained *thirunādu*" (heaven).

This description of the procession gives great insight into several aspects of the personality of Rāmānuja and his followers. We find that the Vedic hymns namely Upanishads were recited first in the procession which shows that Rāmānuja was a Vedantin first and last. Then we find that the first three thousand *prabandams* were recited alternately as a *ghosti* (group recitation) by 9000 persons wearing *upavita* reciting the first two lines of the *prabandam* verses and 12000 people, not wearing the *upavita,* reciting the second part of each verse. This form of singing the *prabandams* in *ghoshti* has been preserved to this day. This also shows the *prabndams* were committed to memory by a large group of people. Allowing exaggeration in the number which according the account was around over 20000 people (as this text is for the followers of the Tenkalai school), the *guru parambara* extols the *prabandham*, it would suggest that all the Sri Vaishnavas traditionally committed the *prabandams* to memory by the time of Rāmānuja. Another aspect of this recitation is that both wearing *upavita* and without it were reciting the *prabandam* as a group which means the *prabandam* tradition went beyond caste barriers. Those who wore *upavita* included Brahmanas, Kshatiryas and Vaisyas and some mixed castes while non *upavitis* (with out sacred thread) were the Sudras. There is no such joint recitation of both the parts together now. However also is a clear indication of the popularity of the *prabandams* among the Vaishnava community to this day. The tradition of reciting verses in two parts as a group *ghoshti* is a Vedic tradition. The Vedic pandits render the hymns and Upanishads etc in this manner even to this day. This system has been adopted by the *prabandam* reciters as well. We may also note that the grouping of the *prabndams* and the method of committing to memory in the same method as the Vedic tradition may be seen in the printed versions as well. In grouping ten hymns of *prabandam* one word from each hymn is chosen and threaded together and committed to memory to indicate what constitutes the ten group. This is based on the Vedic model. We should not forget that the *Prabandams* were called the Tamil Vedas. The same texts mentions earlier that Nāthamuni set the *prabandham* of the Ālvārs to *udātta*, *Anudātta* and *svarita* (high, middle and lower pitches) as in the Vedic tradition.This is also an attempt to claim Vedic authenticity to the *Prabandhams.*

Another point of importance that deserves attention is that *prabandams* consist of 4000 verses; out of this the first three thousands were grouped into first part, while *Tiruvāymoli* of Nammālvār alone is considered the second group. We have seen that the rendering of the first three thousand *prabandams* was called "reciting" *odutal* while the rendering of *Thiruvymoli* alone called "singing". The *Tiruvāymoli* verses have already become a separate but special group in the time of Rāmānuja.

Further it is seen that a separate group who were called the Araiyar, each headed by a leader like Thiruarangattu araiyar were singing the *Tiruvāymoli* hymns They were specially trained for that purpose were singing these songs and dancing in front of the deity. It is known that the tradition of reciting Tevaram hymns of the Saiva saints was hereditarily with the families of a separate group called Oduvars who were specially initiated and trained to sing. Similarly it is evident the singing and dancing of *Tiruvāymoli* hymns was preserved by the special group called Araiyar, a system that has survived only in Srirnagam, and Srivilliputtur now. But as their names indicate they hailed from different *Divykshetras* like Thiruvalundur, Theunaraiyur and other places show this tradition was wide spread. Also please note the *Tiruvāymoli* singers were called *Tambirāns*.

Another point that we may note from this tradition is that a number of families from Telugu – Kannada region have migrated to Tamilnādu particularly to Srirangam area with the arrival of Hoysala rulers, like Vira Narasimha, Vira Somesvara and Vira Rāmanātha and Vira Ballāla immediately after Rāmānuja in the 13th cent. It is also reflected in mediaeval times as pointed out by such names as Vaduga nambi. Among them were many dancing families trained in the art of dance and expositions. Possibly many such families were Araiyars who while dancing also expounded the meaning of the verses. This was special to *Tiruvāymoli* hymns and so we find the commentaries called *Idus* came into existence with a mixture of Sanskrit and Tamil words now called *manipravāla*. Rāmānuja himself belonged to a Telugu Brahmin family, his father being an Asuri.

The other point of interest from the account is that the hundred verses called *Rāmānuja nurrantādi* was said to be known in the time of Rāmānuja himself which was recited in his funeral procession. We are unable to say how far these narration and identification are accurate for the reason that most other events mentioned in Rāmānuja life are legends.

## 12. THE DIVIDE

It is known that Rāmānuja was the third Acharya in the line of Āchārya paramparā, the firs being Nāthamuni, the second Ālavandār (Yāmuna) and the third Rāmānuja. Among them Nāthamunikal hailed from Virnarayana puram also called Kāttu Mannarkuḍi where there is a famous Vishnu temple. Nāthamuni's father was worshipping priest in that temple and so was Nāthamuni. One day he happened to hear a song of Nammālvār by a pilgrim and was astounded by the beauty of the poem. From the singer he learnt it was Nammālvār's poem and when enquired whether there were more such songs of him available he was told if he happened to go to Kurukur he could learn more about them. Nāthamuni is said to have visited Kurukur and learnt about them from one Parānkusa Bhattar who was a direct disciple of Madhurakavi. At the suggestion of Parānkusa Bhattar Nāthamuni recited the particular song 12,000 times, in front of the Tamarind tree and obtained a divine vision. So he was able to recover all the four thousand poems of Ālvārs

Returning to Viranārāyana puram he arranged for their propagation. Later the Chola ruler at Gangaikondachola puram heard these songs, sung by dancing girl. Curious to know more about them he called Nāthamunikal to his court who explained to him that they were the Devagānas and Nāthamuni set them tliterary and musical tunes. Nāthamuni is said to have set them on the line of the Vedas with intonations like *udātta*, *anudātta* and *svarita* (high, middle and low pitches) It was he who moulded them to be sung on the Vedic models and that is the tradition that has come down to this day

Nāthamuni wrote Dvayārtha and taught *Tiruvāymoli* hymns supported the Vedas and Sāstras, *Rahasya traya sāra, Sri Purusha nirnaya, and Nyāsa tattva.* (S.N. Das Gupta , A History of Indian Philosophy Vol III, Motilal Banarsidas Reprint, 1975) Sri Das Gupta has assigned Nāthamunikal to Parāntaka chola's age early 10th Cent.

Nāthamuni's second son's son was Yāmunāchārya who succeeded his grand father as the head there mutha, He composed a number of Sanskrit works like *Gudārtha sāra,* Stotra ratna, *Catus sloki, Gitartha sangraha, Siddhi traya and Agama Prāmanya*

It is evident that both Nāthamuni and Yāmuna belonged to the family of worshipping priests. So their philosophy was in tune with their family traditions and was mainly based on Agamic tradition and ritual worship. Natha muni's work related to *Tattva traya sāra*, and *Nyasa tattva* and *divya prabandam* especially the Tiruvāymoli.Similarly Yāmuna (Ālavandār) also concentrated on *Agama-prāmanya* emphsising the validity of ritual treatise on par with Vedas. Though he wrote *Gitārtha sangraha* his essential thrust was Agamas. When Ālavandār died and his funerary procession took place it was preceeded with, more prominence given to Prabndam singing and dancing by the Ariayars, though the

*Veda parāyana* also formed a part.As both of them have not written any interpretative texts on Vedic works we may say that they were not so much interested in Vedantic studies because they hailed from the woreshipping priests' family.

## Role of the Agara Brahmins

Two inscriptions may also be cited here as examples of land gifts to Agara Brahmins. The first inscription is a gift for Agara Brahmins for *Vedavritti*, *Purāṇa Vritti*, *Vaidya vritti*, *Yajna Bhiksai* vritti and *grāmānga-māna panikal vritti*. The gift was in the reign of Jatavarman Sundara Pāṇḍya in his 10th year 1312 AD. The gift was made to Brahmins of Kodandarama caturvedimangalam set up in the name of the King. (no 223). The other gift is with reference to Brahmins of Ravivrma Caturvedi magalam, made in the reign of Maravarman Kulasekhara 1316 and the purpose of the gift was for *Bhatta vritti, Purāṇa vritti* and *Vaidya vritti* . towards the study and practice of these learnings (no 239). These illustrations will show that the *Aagara bhatta Brahmins* were free to pursue the study of Vedas, Sastras *(Bhatta vritti)*, *Purāṇa vritti*, and *Vaidya vritti* (Medical practice) which confirms that the main thrust of the Bhaṭṭas was *Veda vritti* that attracted Rāmānuja to write his commentaries on *Brahmā Sutras*, *Gita* and *Upanishads*. There were a large number of Caturvedimangalams, established around Sri Rangam temple where these Brahmins were pursuing their studies. Vikrama chola Caturvedimangalam, Kaliyuga rāma caturvedimangalam, Kodandarāmacaturvedimangalam, Ravivarmacaturvedi mangalam, Tuppa nayakar caturvedimangalam, and Nagalammai caturvedimangalam and Sundara Pāṇḍya caturvedimangalam are some such Brahmin settlements that came up centred around Srirangam temple. The 11th to 14 th centuries were the peak period in which such mangalams, were constituted by donors for their spiritual merit and several hundred families were settled in all thes places. The population of Vedic scholars seems to have been quite considerable then.

At this stage we may mention that there always remained a distinction between worshipping priests and Vedapātins. The worshipping priests did learn some Vedic hymns essential for the rituals but mastered Agamas while the Veda pātakas were not empowered to do the rituāls in the temples and so mastered Vedas and Vedānta. The Veda pātakas were expected to recite the Vedas during the daily worship in the temples and during festivals. They were the Agara Brahmanas dedicating their life to the Study of Vedas, Upanishads and related texts and the *Sutra Bhāshyas*. We may say they lived by themselves while the priests remained in the temple mingling with all people as they have to constantly interact with all and do *pujas* for the others. *Parārtha puja*. They have little time left to pursue Vedantic or Sastric studies They were not masters of Vedic studies as the Veda pātins However as Vedas were the fountain head of Indian Religion those who devoted themselves to the study of the Vedas were always treated with highest respect. This did give them a sense of greatness among the worshippers.

However Rāmānuja came from a different tradition. He belonged to the Veda pātaka tradition and was naturally inclined to concentrate on Vedantic exposition by writing *Vedārthasangraha, Brahma Sutra Bhāshya* and *Gitārtha Bhāshya*. He has mastered the vedic texts and the interpretations of the Vedic studies. The *prasthana traya* attracted him as the pathway to realization that propelled him to contribute to the intellectual pursuit as did Sankara earlier Though he approved the Prabandam tradition of Nāthamuni and Ālavandār he did not himself write any commentary on any of the prabandam or on Agamas. We may not be wrong in holding Rāmānuja was essentially and out and out Vedantin, distinct from the Nāthamuni and Ālavandār school. He represented the Vedic school of Sri Vaishnavism, that incorporates the Ālvārs tradition as an integral part for it is nothing but the Vedic tradition.

## Social Impact

Here we may also note an important sri Vaishnava tradition of Tamilnādu The division between the Vedic school and Agamic school was perceptible in their social behaviour as well. The Agamic school employed more local traditions while the Vedic school stuck to the age old Vedic life style.This division did not lead tension or conflict but to a certin extent exlusivism between the two sections. The Agamic school was called the southern school while the Vedic school was called the northern tradition. This gradually accelerated the divide and two schools at the mundane level brought in some minor philosophical points of difference to justify the divide. It seems from a careful observation that the divide into northern and southern is an extension of the divide between Vedic and Agamic schools and so initially confined to Brahmins. The Vadakalai and Tenkalai branching may perhaps be due to this natural divide which widened into a greater division with increasing population and competition for power and influence. For ultimately the common man is absolutely unable to perceive the subtleties of the divide and considers both as identical. This divide percolated into aspirations for temple control, economy and royal support. But the rulers have always respected both equally and did not discriminate between them seen in the Vijayanagara records.In our opinion the divide has no place in the ultimate analysis of Rāmānuja's philosophy. Sects may exist separately with minor differences and social behaviour and perhaps for historical reasons it is necessary that the life style are kept separate, but there could be no doubt these are simple outward expressions but not the ultimate end which is inseperable.

## 13. SRI VAISHNAVAS

I was attending a seminar at Delhi where I met up with a Srivaishnava representative from South India. As our talk proceeded I mentioned about the Srivaishnavas of 8th-–9th centuries. The gentleman with whom I was talking got visibly annoyed with my statement and retorted saying "How can you call all the devotees of Vishnu as Sri Vaishnavas? Rāmānuja only gave the name "Sri Vaishnavas". I was a little surprised and asked him "Are there not many references to Vaishnavas before Rāmānuja"? He shot back saying they may be Vaishnavas but not "Sri-vaishnavas" (with the prefix Sri) for only Rāmānuja gave this name. I could understand his emotional upsurge, as the present Sri Vaishnavas of Tamil nādu and Karnataka consider true Vaishnavism as the one founded by Rāmānuja and anything other than that is not acceptable for them. I respected his attachment and understood how deeply modern Vaishnavism is moulded.

But unfortunately the historical data available give a different picture that also needs to be understood. In this connection I would like to cite some early inscriptions from Srirangam which incidentally are the earliest that survive in that temple. One of it is dated in the time of the Chola Emperor, Āditya. All earlier inscriptions have been lost. We have two inscriptions of Āditya chola, eight inscriptions of his son Parāntaka Chola, one of Gandarāditya Chola, one of

Uttama Chola and a number of fragmentary records of Rājarāja I, and Rājendra I. These records which are definetly earlier to 11th Cent give some details of the history of that temple. There are a number of inscriptions of Kulottunga Chola I and his son Vikrama chola 12th Cent who were contemporaries of Rāmānuja as mentioned earlier.

In the first two inscriptions of Āditya we find the use of the word "Vaishnavas" It is used at the end of the inscription where it is said that this endowment is placed under the protection of the Vaishnavas. In the inscriptions of his son and successor Parāntaka we find the word "Sri Vaishnavas" with the prefix "Sri". The record refers to a gift of one Chakrapāni for the conduct of '*Uttaram*' festival in the month of Panguni for which a land was donated. At the end of this inscription it is said that the Village Assembly of Srirangam should maintain the endowment and the "SriVaishnavas" should protect the charity. (No 7 of South Indian Inscriptions vol XXIV)

This is not the only inscription. Another inscription of the same ruler (907 to 948 CE ) N0 11 of SII XXIV, refers to the SriVaishnavas at the very end as *"Sri Vaishnava rakshai*". This is proof enough to show that the word "Sri Vaishnava" was not coined or introduced by Rāmānuja but existed nearly one hundred years before the birth of Rāmānuja in the records of Srirangam where Rāmānuja stayed and introduced his reforms. So the contention of my friend that this word should not be used to denote Vaishnava devotees earlier to Rāmānuja is totally incorrect.

I may also cite another interesting inscription from the same temple dated in the reign of Rājādhirāja chola who started ruling from 1017, the year in which Rāmānuja was born. The inscription is unfortunately badly fragmented and is in 20 bits. It is dated in his 30th year, that is when Rāmānuja was still at Kanchipuram and had not yet come to Srirangam. It refers to a gift of 30 *kaḻanju* of gold for providing food offering to Lord Ranganātha in special festival. The gold was entrusted in the hands of the "Sri Vaishnavas" who had to feed in a *matha* of Alagiya manavālan, the SriVaishnavas of 18 territories who came to witness the festival. It shows that there was no Rāmānuja *matha* in Srirangam then and there were already Sri Vaishnavas spread over eighteen territorial divisions of Tamilnad (it means the whole of Tamilnādu) and it is certainly wrong to hold that the term was coined by Sri Rāmānuja and also that his followers alone should be called SriVaishnavas. I can cite many inscriptions referring to Sri Vaishnavas before Rāmānuja and am convinced that a proper historical understanding is required about our own religious systems.

# 14. SRIMATE RĀMĀNUJĀYA NAMAH

It is customary in modern times for all the "SriVaishnavas" of Tamil nādu to follow *Sri Rāmānuja·darsana* and so write in all the documents *"Srimate Rāmānujāya namah"* at the beginning. Most of the books connected with SriVaishnavam begin with this salutation. which is a clear evidence of the influence of Rāmānuja over all the Srivaishnavas. However this salutation does not seem to be an ancient custom seen in Srirangam inscriptions. So far as I could see there are only two instances where this salutation is noticed in the records. One occurs in the record of 1552 CE and the other around 1605. In all the other instances including the records of 19th cent this tradition is not found in any of the documents at the Srirangam temple. The first occurs in the time of Sadāśiva rāya (1552), in Tamil language. There are many records of the same ruler in the same temple but they do not carry this salutation at the beginning.The second is found in the record of Vira Venkatapati deva in 1605 and written in Telugu. The custom seems to be of recent origin.

# 15. CONCLUSION

It is important to keep another aspect in mind while studying Rāmānuja. He was born into a family of vedic scholars and studies Vedas and Advaita Vedanta too (under Yādavaprakāsa). He had set himelf with two ideals from the very beginning viz that the Supreme is MahāVishnu –Para Vāsudeva. The second is that the ultimate attainment would take the devotee to *Vishno padam*, Vaikunta. These two are uncompromising ideals and any answer for ultimate knowledge had to be sought within this framework.

There is no doubt that Sankara before him had set the wheel of inquiry turning by boldly declaring Advaita as the answer to all the questions posed by different Upanishads. He tried to synthesize the approaches and took up the *Brahma sūtras* of Vyasa as the basic text for study.The *Brahma sūtras* is an extraordinary text. Before Sage Vyāsa's time, a very great body of literature had accumulated mainly in the Upanishads, most of the time speaking in one voice about *Brahma vidyā* and at the same time throwing in diverse suggestions. It had grown up almost like a banyan tree with overgrown branches. Vyāsa by reducing many of these concepts into short and crisp sūtras packed an ocean of knowledge behind each sūtra. It is impossible to understand the whole body of knowledge in a unitary way. Sankara brought in a much-needed cohesion. He was close to the Vedic ideals in point of time but the exact date of Sankara is not known. But it is evident from his writing that his Vedic ideology was closer to its origin and the role of temples and the rituals centred around temples were yet to develop to the extent it did later. There were also not many regional texts. Sankara's treatment captivated the highest of thinkers. From Sankara to Rāmānuja many changes got ushered in, the population has growing in leaps and bounds. Great temples, spread over vast regions came up playing greater role than they did in the time of Sankara. Agamas assumed greater position in the life of the people where temple rituals were concerned and each school of Agama developed its own philosophy. Temples became power centres with people vying for influence and control. Different traditions flowed in from different regions with migration of masters and teachers. So Rāmānuja had to face new challenges to the Vedic tradition that he had been exposed. He was amidst Vedic Brahmanas living in a number of caturvedimangalams and agarams around temples and their concept of the vedic ideals were under stress. There were innumerable Bhaṭṭas, exponents of Sāstras in the temples and it is known the study of Sāstras was enlarged by new exposition of logic -Tarka. Rāmānuja as an intellectual took up this challenge and rose up to give the required thrust to the Vedic studies and way of life. He now admirably synthesized the Vedic ideals with the temple Agamic movement. But the regional expositions reflected in the Ālvārs' hymns were couched in a beautiful musical idiom which was preserved by a specially trained class of singers and it was easy for listeners to be immersed in their beauty and emotion of theology. This could be taken care of by any learned person but he was concerned with basic philosophical enquiry on the fundamentals of Vedic ideals which had now become little more distant. As an out and out Vedic intellect he readied himself to take up the challenge through the same *Brahma sutra* where Sankara had distinquished himself earlier. Anyone conversant with Sankara's exposition knows that it is not easy for one to hold his own in front of Sankara's monumental work. Further Rāmānuja had chosen to work with the two parameter he had set to himself, that the Supreme is none other than Mahavishnu and the *Vaikunta prāpti* to enjoy all happiness was real. With this limitation he achieved such a signal position which makes Rāmānuja a luminary in the rank of great thinkers. So he rightly chose not to exert himself on mundane activities like taking over a temple and administering it, or writing a commentary on *prabandham*, or going to Delhi Sultan etc. Rāmānuja was absolutely sure that the *prabandams* were but the essence of the same Vedic traditions expressed in regional language and by enquiring into the original the regional is taken care of. Nor was he interested in the so called social reforms that are visualized in modern times. It seems that all these were not the work of such a great thinker. A critical study seems to suggest that these were conferred on him very much later by his own pious devotees. They had no place in history. Rāmānuja was the very embodiment of Vedic philosophy, which had been the very breath of our society from ancient times.

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# ERRATUM

| Page | Line | Word | Replace |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 16 | However | delete |
| 10 | 10 | Advitatin | Advaitin |
| | 21 | Saod | said |
| 13 | 7 | According | According to |
| 16 | 3 | Caraitam | Caritam |
| 17 | 29 | descase | disease |
| 18 | 7 | Hussian | Hussain |
| | 13 | of his | of |
| 19 | 14 | herself | delete |
| | 19 | who alone can sign on our behalf | delete |
| 21 | 11 | writng | writing |
| 28 | 9 | Biitiga | Bittiga |
| 29 | 3 | Vaishnavismin | Vaishnavism in |
| 30 | 9 | brought | wrought |
| 31 | 18 | unwillingly | delete |
| 33 | 7 | the story of | delete |
| | 22 | Sudāras | Sudras |
| 37 | 11 | country | contrary |
| 38 | 8 | the considered | they considered |
| | 13 | mentioned | is mentioned |
| 39 | 1 | servents | servants |
| 43 | 13 | shepered | shepherd |
| 45 | 2 | one | one head |
| 47 | 2 | th | the |
| 48 | 25 | elcted | elected |
| 51 | 26 | Rajarajaja III | Rajaraja III |
| | 28 | hands | hands of |
| 52 | 3 | Srkāryam | Srikāryam |
| | 7 | seems to have continued to have existed. | seem to have continued to exist |
| | 15 | regin | reign |
| 53 | 31 | Tamil Nadu. The | Tamil Nadu, the |
| 54 | 2 | has | have |
| | 3 | wood stucco | wood or stucco |
| 57 | 11 | axailble | available |
| 58 | 14 | Thiruvadiāyai | Thiruvadiyai |
| 62 | 17 | refernce | reference |
| 65 | 4 | any | anyone |
| | 16 | geneal | general |
| | 23 | pjilosophy | philosophy |
| 66 | 10 | the Ādisaivas | . The Adisaivas |
| 66 | 13 | the there | there |
| 71 | 5 | mandalam | mangalam |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 74 | 11 | sighned | signed |
| | 22 | Nāthamunigical | Nāthamunigal |
| 76 | 12 | singing | singing of |
| 80 | 25 | Sāttvatass | Sāttvatas |
| 81 | 19 | suggest though | suggests that though |
| 82 | 21 | Bahmā | Brahma |
| | 25 | their | its |
| | 25 | exhibit | exhibits |
| 85 | 5 | Āriyairappadi | Āarayirappadi |
| | 28 | transcendent | transcends |
| 86 | 28 | found | find |
| 88 | 6 | the experience, | experience |
| 92 | 11 | temples to | delete |
| 94 | 5 | Thiruvaymolzi | Thiruvāymoli |
| 95 | 1 | அரனை | அரனை அலற்றி |
| | 3 | அவல் இல் | அவா இல் |
| | 5 | உயர்ந்ததே | உயர்ந்தே |
| | 21 | சேர்தியோ | சோதியோ |
| 98 | 29 | contempoaray | contemporary |
| 103 | 15 | குரர் | சுரர் |
| | 17 | புரடுமாரு | புரமொரு |
| 104 | 6 | நம்பிக்க | நம்பிக்கு |
| 105 | 19 | Kndādai | Kandādai |
| 107 | 12 | Brahmā | Brahma |
| 109 | 17 | , There | ; there |
| 110 | 1 | prabndams | prabandams |
| | 3 | the account | to the account |
| | 14 | However also is a | But there is a |
| | 21 | prabndams | prabandams |
| 111 | 23 | Theunaraiyur | Thirunaraiyur |
| | 23 | show | which shows |
| 113 | 2 | firs | first |
| | 16 | the particular | a particular |
| 114 | 2 | Nāthamuni set them tliterary and musical tunes. | that he had set them to tunes. |
| | 9 | supported | supported by |
| | 15 | head there mutha, | head of the matha there. |
| | 29 | preceeded with, more prominence given to Prabndam | preceded by Prabandam |
| | 30 | Ariayars | Araiyars |
| 115 | 17 | Aagara | Agara |
| 116 | 4 | thes | these |
| | 24 | with highest | with the highest |
| 117 | 18 | a certin extent exlusivism | some exclusivism |